#98 JAN 2001

PC ZONE

www.pczone.co.uk

PC GAMES NIRVANA

DEFINITIVE REVIEW

ALICE

Quake III in Wonderland

WORLD EXCLUSIVE REVIEW

SEVERANCE: BLADE OF DARKNESS

Heads will roll...

IN-DEPTH PREVIEW

OPERATION FLASHPOINT

The Cold War hots up

OVER 50 PAGES OF REVIEWS

ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND
TOMB RAIDER CHRONICLES
COLIN MCRAE RALLY 2.0
HITMAN: CODENAME 47
TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2
STAR TREK: DS9 – THE FALLEN
NO ONE LIVES FOREVER
SIMON THE SORCERER 3D
CALL TO POWER II
LINKS 2001
SCREAMER 4X4

IF YOUR COVERMOUNT IS MISSING PLEASE CONSULT YOUR NEWSAGENT ○ CD NOT AVAILABLE ON EXPORT COPIES ○ TINY COMPO: Who was the star of the movie *Blade*?

PLUS! STAR TREK: DS9 – DOMINION WARS • PLANETSIDE • MOHO • CONFLICT ZONE • Z: STEEL SOLDIERS • BATTLEFIELD: 1942 • COUNTER-STRIKE V1.0 • DESPERADOS: WANTED DEAD OR ALIVE • ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND

£3.50 JANUARY 2001 PCZ#98
9 771354 070049 01
EXPORT PRICE £4.99 Bf 424

Worms World Party © 2000 Team17 Software. Team17 and Worms are registered or trademarks of Team17

This year, the average person will unwittingly suffer from at least one type of worm infestation.

With tougher, meaner worms and on-line game play, it's an epidemic in the making.

WORMS WORLD PARTY. A TRULY GLOBAL PROBLEM.

PC CD

WORMS WORLD PARTY

TEAM17

Virgin INTERACTIVE

WIN THE TOP 10 PC GAMES
SEE THE PC ZONE CHARTS
PAGE 24

WIN! A DELL PC AND A DREAMCAST
PAGE 110

42 OPERATION FLASHPOINT Czechoslovakia has already produced *Hidden & Dangerous*. Now it's time to take digital warfare one step closer to reality with Codemaster's epic.

66 ALICE *Alice In Wonderland* and the *Quake III* engine meet in our review.

70 ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND A welcome return to form for LucasArts.

83 TOMB RAIDER CHRONICLES Lara's back for one more adventure.

74 COLIN MCRAE RALLY 2.0 Left. Right. Hard left. Hard right. Review.

80 TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2 It's like, actually quite radical dude.

PCZ CONTENTS

PREVIEWS

We take a look at the games we're getting unnaturally excited about

42 OPERATION FLASHPOINT
Experience digital warfare on your PC as Codemasters brings you another epic that doesn't fit into its family portfolio.

46 MECHWARRIOR 4
Are you ready to experience the most stunning recreation of the BattleTech universe?

48 DESPERADOS
Once Upon A Time In The West meets *Commandos* head-on.

50 FATE OF THE DRAGON
We travelled all the way to China to bring you this exclusive preview.

53 CONFLICT ZONE
Hold the front page. A novel take on the stale RTS genre is coming.

55 ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND
Can this new 3D RPG topple *Baldur's Gate* from its beardy heights?

REVIEWS

The most definitive reviews section around. All the latest and greatest PC games (and, of course, some of the worst) come under the cynical *PC ZONE* microscope

NEW GAMES

60 SEVERANCE: BLADE OF DARKNESS
66 AMERICAN MCGEE'S ALICE
70 ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND
74 COLIN MCRAE RALLY 2
77 SIMON THE SORCERER 3D
78 HITMAN: CODENAME 47
80 TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2
83 TOMB RAIDER CHRONICLES
84 LINKS 2001
86 CIVILIZATION: CALL TO POWER 2
88 DEEP SPACE NINE: THE FALLEN
90 NO ONE LIVES FOREVER
91 BLAIR WITCH VOLUME 2
92 SCREAMER 4X4
94 MOHO
94 CHAMPIONSHIP RUGBY MANAGER
94 SUPERCROSS KINGS
95 MTV SKATEBOARDING
95 DIRT TRACK RACING
95 FUR FIGHTERS
96 MOTOCROSS MANIA
96 THANDOR: THE INVASION
96 KAWASAKI ATV POWERSPORTS
97 JETFIGHTER IV
97 CITY TRADER
97 HOGS OF WAR

BUDGET REVIEWS

98 JIMMY WHITE'S 2 CUEBALL
98 HERETIC 2
98 HEAVY GEAR 2
99 JACK NICKLAUS 6: GOLDEN BEAR CHALLENGE
99 BEETLE CRAZY CUP
99 TA: KINGDOMS
99 WHEEL OF TIME

READERS' REVIEWS

101 FEEDBACK

ONLINE

News, previews and reviews on the latest happenings in online gaming

NEWS

104 PLANETSIDE
106 ULTIMA ONLINE: THIRD AGE
108 DARK AGE OF CAMELOT
110 COMPO: WIN A PC AND A DREAMCAST

REVIEWS

112 COUNTER-STRIKE 1.0
The first full release of our favourite game is here. It's not going on sale in the UK, but you can find it on our cover CD once you've read our verdict.

115 C&C: RED ALERT 2
We were pleasantly surprised by Westwood's last 2D RTS, but now it's time to go online and deliver the multiplayer verdict.

116 GAME SERVER BROWSERS ROUND-UP
Want to make it easier to get online and start fragging? Find out which server browser is the best.

The arsenal at your disposal is absolutely mind-blowing. There are approximately 100 objects of destruction to choose from

60 SEVERANCE: BLADE OF DARKNESS After five years in the making, *Severance* is about to hit the shelves with a huge red 18-certificate on the front. Read our exclusive review and find out why there's more than just mindless violence to Codemaster's hack 'n'slash epic.

ON THE CD

FULL DETAILS PAGE 147

EXCLUSIVE AND FULLY PLAYABLE DEMOS!

SEVERANCE: BLADE OF DARKNESS
PROJECT IGI

PLUS

COUNTER-STRIKE 1.0
ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND
METAL GEAR SOLID
ZEUS: MASTER OF OLYMPUS
COSSACKS: EUROPEAN WARS
FIFA 2001
SETTLERS: SMACK A THIEF

BULLETIN

Quite literally the most definitive games news section in the universe

10 BATTLEFIELD: 1942
The follow up to *Codename: Eagle* proves to be more than impressive.

12 DS9: DOMINION WARS
The Star Trek games keep on coming, this time with a space RTS sheen.

14-31 BULLETIN
Gaming news from all over the planet.

22 TECH HEAD
Reporting from COMDEX in Las Vegas

24 THE PC ZONE CHARTS
Current and past PC game charts, and the chance to win the Top 10 games

30 THE MAN WHO KNOWS
Exposing the darker side of gaming.

34 HOTSHOTS
Z: Steel Soldiers aims some pretty pictures straight at your eyes.

REGULARS

Lots of stuff about stuff, or something like that

37 MAILBOX
Go on, get it off your chest. Write a letter to the editor and win a new mouse.

118 HARDWARE: GRAPHICS CARDS
ATI's Radeon and the 3D Prophet II Ultra go head-to-head.

120 HARDWARE: UPGRADES
Looking to upgrade? We've got the ultimate Christmas wish list.

138 PC ZONE TOP 100
An organic buyers' guide that shows you the best games to spend your money on.

147 ON THE CD
Details of all the good stuff we've jammed onto the cover disc.

155 SUBSCRIBE
Save money and get *PC ZONE* delivered to your door every month.

TROUBLESHOOTER

The most extensive and comprehensive tips section in town

124 CHEATMASTER
Having troubles? Well, don't stress, 'cos Keith Pullin's here to help you out.

126 DIABLO II WALKTHROUGH: PART 2
Still stuck? Finish the game in style with our completed walkthrough.

132 DEAR WANDY
He speaks binary, don'tcha know.

134 WATCHDOG
Got a gripe about a game or a publisher? Have a cry on Adam Phillips' shoulder.

END ZONE

Just when you thought the mag had ended... blimey, a whole lot more!

160 EXTENDED PLAY
Don't buy new games. Change the ones you've got. This month we've got loads of maps for *Voyager: Elite Force.*

174 THE WORLD ACCORDING TO DREW MARKHAM
We talk to Drew Markham from Gray Matter about life after *Kingpin* and *Return To Castle Wolfenstein.*

162 TEAM TALK
Late night poker, five-a-side football and show-jumping. We do have lives outside of *Counter-Strike.*

Turn to page 120 and check out our Christmas hardware extravaganza.

WIN!

THE COMPO NO ONE FINDS Correctly answer this month's cover question and you could win some PC goodies. Send your entry on a postcard addressed to: **The Compo No One Finds (98), *PC ZONE*, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF**. The first entry with the correct answer plucked out of the hat wins a mystery prize. The editor's decision is final. Closing date: Wednesday January 10, 2001. The winner of our December (#96) cover compo was Innes Clatworthy from Middlesex, who wins something from the *ZONE* prizes cupboard for sending in the correct answer to our last little teaser.

PC WORLD

THE COMPUTER SUPERSTORE

SAVE £10 when bought with Baldur's Gate II

Microsoft SideWinder Gamevoice
The best control for your gaming, communicate with your friends whilst you play online

£39.99 INC VAT

The Ultimate All Under

OVER 1000 TOP GAMES AVAILABLE TO PLAY TODAY

Who wants to be a Millionaire £24.99 INC VAT

Sudden Strike £29.99 INC VAT

Sheep £29.99 INC VAT

Hitman £29.99 INC VAT

Championship Manager 00/01

- 26 concurrent leagues.
- Accurate profiles and histories for over 50,000 players, managers and coaches.
- A full interactive transfer system featuring all the elements of modern day negotiations.
- Data Editor, allowing you to change and modify the stats used in the game.
- Local and National media involvement, you can now read and reply to media stories about the clubs players and events in the game.
- For the ultimate challenge you can now play the game using randomised fictional players!

£24.99 INC VAT

INTERNET 10x FASTER with freeserveplus

www.freeserve.com

Ask in-store for details

◀ Logitech Wingman USB Gamepad
£19.99 INC VAT

◀ Microsoft SideWinder Force Feedback Pro
£89.99 INC VAT

SAVE £20 when bought with Combat Flight Sim

Microsoft SideWinder Gamepad Pro ▶
£29.99 INC VAT

SAVE £10 when bought with Metal Gear Solid

Saitek ST110 ▶
£19.99 INC VAT

Microsoft ▶ Strategic Commander
Great for strategy games, SC allows you to view your situation in the game from different angles
£49.99 INC VAT

SAVE £10 when bought with Age of Empires 2

Games Choice One Roof

Project IGI
£29.99 INC VAT

Combat Flight Simulator 2
£29.99 INC VAT

FIFA 2001
£29.99 INC VAT

B17 Flying Fortress 2 The Mighty Eighth
£29.99 INC VAT

Starship Troopers
£29.99 INC VAT

Tomb Raider Chronicles
£29.99 INC VAT

3dfx Voodoo³ 3000 ▶
Available AGP or PCI
Was £99.99.
LIMITED STOCKS
£79.99 INC VAT

SAVE £20

SAVE £20

3dfx ▲ Voodoo³ 4500
£129.99 INC VAT
Available AGP or PCI. Was £149.99.

NEW

Creative Labs ▲ GeForce 2 MX
£99.99 INC VAT

The latest generation of PC graphics accelerators allow you to get the best out of today's games. Superior 3D Effects and supersmooth images provide the most realistic gameplay possible.

PLUS
100's OF OTHER
GAMING ACCESSORIES IN-STORE NOW

SHOP ON-LINE AT
www.pcworld.co.uk

STORES NATIONWIDE
FOR YOUR NEAREST STORE
CALL 08705 464 464

PC WORLD
THE COMPUTER SUPERSTORE

We promise that if you find the same offer available at a lower price in any other local retail store within 7 days of purchase, we'll refund the difference guaranteed – provided you can produce your receipt and details of where you saw the offer. All games titles featured are based on current release schedules and maybe subject to change.

EAT DIRT

YOU'RE MINE

FOLLOW M

COVER ME

QUICK, TAKE COVER

ET'S GET OUTTA HER

SPEAK YOUR MIND

MICROSOFT SIDEWINDER GAME VOICE

For the ultimate PC gaming experience, SideWinder® Game Voice is the most revolutionary device in voice chat and voice command. Link up with your on-line friends quickly and easily, then plot your revenge on enemies, taunt your opponents, discuss the latest gaming tactics, manage your teams more efficiently and shout your winning elation. Want to carry out gaming commands without taking your finger off the pulse? Then just say the word and the game will carry out your instructions, so no more complex keyboard commands. **Isn't it time you made yourself heard?**

www.gamevoice.co.uk

Microsoft

© 2000 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved. Microsoft, Game Voice, and SideWinder, are trademarks or registered trademarks of the Microsoft Corporation in the US and/or other countries.

PCZONE

DENNIS PUBLISHING LTD
30 CLEVELAND STREET
LONDON W1P 5FF
TEL: 020 7907 6000
FAX: 020 7907 6020
EMAIL: letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk
WEBSITE: www.pczone.co.uk

RACING TOWARDS DEADLINE

Editor	Chris Anderson	020 7907 6376
Acting Editor	Dave Woods	020 7907 6375
Managing Editor	Ruth Lindsay	020 7907 6371
Online Editor	Richie Shoemaker	020 7907 6378
Art Editor	Phil Clark	020 7907 6380
News Editor	Mark Hill	020 7907 6377
Section Editor	Martin Korda	020 7907 6379
Designers	Tim MacDonald, Colin Mackleworth	
Sub Editors	Britt Collins, Lara Kilner, Amanda Ellis	
Writers	Daniel Emery, Steve Hill, James Lyon, Tony Lamb, Paul Mallinson, Jed Norton, Adam Phillips, Paul Presley, Keith Pullin, Phil Wand, Andrew Wright	
EPU Manager	Sarah Gilliver	020 7907 6332
CD Producer	Alan Stonebridge	020 7907 6336
CD Editor	Matthew Cheshire	020 7907 6335
Origination	Elements	020 7323 0022
Printed in England by	ET Heron	
Distribution	Seymour Distribution	

CHEERING THEM ON

Publisher	Helen Cribb	020 7907 6370
Associate Publisher	Tara Leathers	020 7907 6508
Consultant Creative Director	Vici MacDonald	
Advertisement Director	Ian Westwood	
Senior Group Ad Manager	John Garewal	020 7907 6008
Leisure Group Ad Manager	Mandy Hewitt adman.pczone@dennis.co.uk	020 7907 6670
Account Manager	Richard Downey	020 7907 6671
Senior Sales Executive	Emily Ford	020 7907 6672
Group Classified Controller	Emma Regester	020 7907 6683
Classified Sales Executive	Beth Edwards	020 7907 6681
New Media Sales Manager	Pete Wootton	020 7907 6801
Production Manager	Ollie Chislett	020 7907 6057
Group Production Manager	Simon Maggs	020 7907 6051
List Rental Executive	Nerys Church	020 7907 6140
Direct Marketing Director	Julian Thorne	
Newstrade Manager	Frzana Rehman	020 7907 6148
Research Director	Lesley Downey	020 7907 6110
Publishing Director	Christine Martin	
Circulation & Marketing Services Director	Sean Farmer	
Non-Executive Director	Dick Pountain	
Financial Director	Ian Leggett	
Managing Director	Alistair Ramsay	
Chairman	Felix Dennis	

TIPS LINE: 0906 466 4475
Open seven day a week. Calls cost £1.50 per minute (see page 125).

SUBSCRIPTIONS HOTLINE:
01454 620070 cihotline@aol.com

BACK ISSUES: 01789 490215

NEXT ISSUE: *PCZ* #99
goes on sale on Thursday 11 January. Don't miss it!

PCZONE is published 13 times a year by Dennis Publishing Ltd. Company registered in England, number 1138891. Entire contents © Dennis Publishing Limited licensed by Felden PC ZONE *is pleased to recognise all copyrights. Wherever possible we have acknowledged the copyright holder. If we haven't, contact us and we'll happily correct any oversight. All letters are assumed to be for publication unless marked otherwise.*

OVERSEAS LICENSING ENQUIRIES:
PCZONE is available for licensing overseas. For details contact International Licensing Director Kerin O'Connor. Tel +44 020 7907 6136; email licensedir@dennis.co.uk. For syndication enquiries contact International Licensing Manager Rob Willis Tel +44 020 7907 6135 email license@dennis.co.uk.

PC ZONE is licensed in the Benelux countries by Promotime Publications bv.

TEL +31 (0) 23 540 00 08
FAX +31 (0) 23 535 80 29

A YEAR OF LIVING DANGEROUSLY

This time last year we introduced our Top 100, the only organic buyer's guide in any PC games magazine. We also adopted a harsher scoring system to make it easier for you to distinguish between the true classics and the best of the rest. We reckon it's been a success, and looking back at the past 12 issues I was pleased to see that we've only allowed six games into our exclusive club.

I think you'll agree that *Deus Ex, Championship Manager, Shogun, EverQuest* and *Counter-Strike* are all worthy of the Classic title, for showing vision, originality and for being the best in their field. The only one that hasn't lasted the test of time is *Vampire*, which had vision and the multiplayer potential to trounce the opposition, but unfortunately it didn't quite take off, and the single-player game was a tad linear.

Still, if you'd spent your money on any of these six titles, I reckon you'd have been pretty pleased. And, if you're happy, we're happy because it means we're doing our job. If you can only afford a few games a year, you can trust us to show you which ones you should be buying.

"At least try to look pleased, Duncan. They don't give their awards out willy-nilly, you know!"

If we gave out 90 per cent scores to every half-decent game we saw, or every game on our cover, then we'd be putting publishers before you, and we're not about to go down that road.

So we're going to carry on in the same way in 2001. It doesn't do us any favours with the publishers and we might lose out on a few exclusives along the way, but we reckon we owe it to you to stick to our guns. The best advice we can give is not to buy any games until you've seen them reviewed here. Also, you can look forward to some major changes in the magazine over the next few months. All superb, of course.

Aside from all that, all I've got to say to you is I hope you have an absolutely cracking 2001. Thanks for your support last year. Without you we would be nothing.

Dave Woods
Acting Editor

"If you can only afford a few games a year, you can trust us to show you which ones you should be buying"

Definitely a much better looker than *Codename: Eagle.*

WHOLESOME BLOODSHED FOR ALL THE FAMILY

BATTLEFIELD: 1942

Vehicles, aeroplanes and sniper rifles in one tight package? Who says the digital battlefield will never happen?

LANDING ON THE BEACH Mark Hill

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Digital Illusions
PUBLISHER TBA
EXPECTED RELEASE DATE Summer 2001
WEBSITE www.dice.se

IN SUMMARY

A World War II shooter that is action-packed enough to appeal to *Quake* fans but also offers enough detail to satisfy those who prefer a more thoughtful approach. *Battlefield: 1942* also has great graphics, and to top it off, you can drive and fly a variety of vehicles and aircraft and participate in massive battles.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

Codename: Eagle might not have set the British market alight, but the success of the likes of *Hidden & Dangerous* and *Counter-Strike*, the better-looking graphics and the dearth of flight sims that everyday gamers can play, should give this one a bigger audience.

Burying flags seems like a good idea to us.

Hop into a plane for some real dog-fighting action.

Nice camping spot you've got there.

A good kamikaze mission always goes down well.

Ahh, if only this was the *Beach Head* sub-game.

The vogue for transforming some of the 20th century's darkest and bloodiest moments into popular entertainment continues unabated. The film industry has exploited World War II for all it's worth, so nobody could begrudge the likes of Swedish developer Digital Illusions following up its relatively unsuccessful (in the UK at least) *Codename: Eagle* with another slice of digitised massacre.

To be fair, games such as *Hidden & Dangerous* and DI's forthcoming *Battlefield: 1942* are all about playing soldiers – a more advanced form of running around the front room with water-pistols when you were eight years old. DI can therefore be forgiven for not exploring its subject with the solemnity of *Schindler's List* or the condemning savagery of *Saving Private Ryan*. In fact, *Battlefield: 1942* looks just about as advanced as you could hope for (*Flashpoint*, previewed on page 42, notwithstanding) and as much fun as you could imagine.

The developers are keen to point out that they are aiming for a more arcadey approach to warfare rather than the slow tactical manoeuvres of *Hidden & Dangerous*, but it might surprise you to learn how much detail they plan to include. For starters, you can use a large number of vehicles – not only the usual fare of jeeps and tanks, but accurately modelled planes for a real flight sim edge.

By the time you've read the *Flashpoint* preview you'll probably be wondering what the point is of getting excited about *Battlefield: 1942* when Bohemia's game promises so much. But you should keep in mind that this will be a much more player-friendly experience, appealing as much to the *Quake* community as to the *Counter-Strike* one.

But it does share with *Flashpoint* an open-ended structure and a fine eye for detail. And there is a reason why so many WWII games are made: they are incredibly popular. Set a mission on the Serbian border and people will nod appreciatively. Set it in Normandy and a strange glow starts to emanate from their excited eyes. Digital Illusion has already promised a mission that sees you landing on a beach amid a hail of bullets, whether you choose to control the landing craft or just throw yourself among the thriving mass of soon-to-be-dead bodies, while battleships behind you lend supporting fire. There's no denying *Battlefield*'s enormous sense of scale.

"You land on a beach amid a hail of bullets, and choose to control the landing craft or just throw yourself among the thriving mass of soon-to-be-dead bodies"

The vehicles are sure to prove a popular aspect, but a war game is nothing if you can't climb to the top of a half-bombed building in a small village and start picking off enemy soldiers with a sniper rifle... and it does that, too.

If you're still not excited, you should consider the multiplayer aspects, ranging as they do from complex battles with land soldiers, pilots and players firing tanks, to the more intimate *Counter-Strike* sneak and shoot contests. DI is being careful to allow the Mod squads to tweak almost every detail and come up with their own ideas. Only time will tell if all these great ideas actually work on your monitor. For the time being, though, the screenshots are ample enough proof that this could be something very special indeed. PZ

TOP STORY

You'll recognise most of the ships from the series, although some new ones have been introduced.

WHERE EVERYONE HAS GONE BEFORE

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE – DOMINION WARS

Just when everyone thought *DS9* was dead and buried, here comes a space RTS starring Sisko and chums

REDSHIRT Mark Hill

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Gizmo Games
PUBLISHER Simon & Schuster
EXPECTED RELEASE DATE March 2001
WEBSITE www.simonsays.com

IN SUMMARY

Dominion Wars sets out to achieve a spectacular big-battle space strategy game. All the major races, all the known ships and a points system for the characters commanding the individual ships make *Dominion Wars* a more interesting proposition than most.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

While *Armada* was a straightforward *C&C* in space affair, *Dominion Wars* is going for a full 3D space environment and concentrates on tactical decisions rather than resource management. If the game can capture the awe the best episodes of *DS9* managed to inspire, we could be in a for a real treat.

Will it be better than *Starfleet Command 2*? Wait and see.

A head-on collision. Not the most useful of camera angles.

"The shields canna take it anymore." Oh, wrong series.

Can't have a space game without some lovely effects. No matter how unrealistic they are.

Sisko himself is one of the captains you can assign to the ships.

The Defiant will obviously be the crown jewel of the Federation fleet.

There were two kinds of *Deep Space Nine* episodes. There were the character-based ones, where Sisko would have long father/son talks with Jake, Doctor Bashir would have his heart broken by a paralytic alien and Odo would lust like a pining sock puppet over Major Kira.

Because most of these episodes sent the audience into a frenzy of boredom and desperation, the second kind was introduced. These were the massive space battles between the Federation, Klingons, Dominion and Cardassians, with the kind of lavish special effects that a Hollywood sci-fi production would be proud of.

While the *Star Wars* films will always be everyone's pick of screen space battles, they were essentially about fast fighters on impossible missions. In *DS9*, the battles had thousands of vessels on each side, playing out political conflicts rather than the 'one man against evil' scenario. It's no surprise then that Gizmo has chosen this fertile area to set its space strategy game, taking full advantage of the complex background from the series and the interplay of all the major characters.

There are more than 30 missions set over three campaigns, with all the ships seen in the series as well as the obligatory 'designed specially for the game' vessels. Who commands those ships is much more than a merely aesthetic choice – an experience point system builds up the characters, making each one an invaluable asset.

Unlike *Star Trek: Armada*, there is no 'shake & bake' management, so you can concentrate more on the purely tactical aspect of the battles. Because you are made to feel close to the people commanding each ship, you won't be making any rash decisions or sending them needlessly to their deaths (unless you don't like them, of course). And because you can't simply mine some dilithium and churn out more via a spaceship factory, losing a ship will be an important event. More so because you will also lose a valuable captain who will have gained previous experience.

"*Dominion Wars*' graphics are the business and come with a 3D engine that will allow for all the spinning, rotating and zooming you could ever wish for"

The graphics are the business and come with a 3D engine that will allow for all the spinning, rotating and zooming you could ever wish for. Just as importantly, multiplayer is a big part of the game, allowing diehard fans to reconstruct their favourite battles and play as any of the races.

If you're wondering who Gizmo Games is, it might help you to know that the people in the company have previously worked on such luminous titles as *Dark Reign*, *MechWarrior 2* and *Heavy Gear*.

We'll have to wait a few months before we find out if they've managed to produce an RTS worthy of the *Star Trek* licence, or whether we're just facing yet another case of cashing-in on a big name with a game glued on it.

LATE NIGHT POLKA

NEWS EDITOR Mark Hill

There's no denying that Thursdays are the greatest for good television, and we're not talking about *Holby City*. In the early evening you have the wittiest slice of teenage irony this side of *Scream* with *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*. You might think it's a superficial *Hollyoaks* with creatures of the night thrown in for laughs, which is only watched by boys drooling over Sarah Michelle Gellar and girls swooning over Angel. But watch a couple of episodes and you'll soon realise how intelligent, funny and subversive it is. What we've seen of the ever-delayed game version looks excellent, but we're wary of whether the true spirit of the series can be captured (a worry we share to a lesser extent for the *Evil Dead* game).

Switching over to Channel 4, you can find what can only be described as the best drama series ever (an accolade shared with David Lynch's *Twin Peaks*, who incidentally has filmed the ad campaign for the PS2). We're talking, of course, about *The Sopranos*. There are no plans to turn Tony's power struggles (both domestic and business) into an action/adventure with a 'threatening your psychiatrist with a small table' sub-game. The closest you'll find is *Mafia* and *Gangsters 2*, neither of which are set in modern New Jersey. Wouldn't it be great if they made a mod for *Hitman* in which you were sent to local shops and sauna parlours to beat the crap out of owners who hadn't paid their 'protection' money?

Which brings us to the other great Thursday TV programme: *Late Night Poker*. Not only is it the cause of as many late nights as *Championship Manager*, it's also lost me loads of money in our version of the game. The big question is, why isn't there a good poker PC game? You could have a Western level where you kick the table and shoot anyone with aces up their sleeves and a level where you get to play with Frank Sinatra Jnr in the executive game. I'll go and do something more useful, shall I?

TECHHEAD
The latest and greatest hardware news
P.22

THE PCZONE CHARTS
What's in, out, up and down
P.24

SPACE MARINES

A first-person shooter set in space? *Zero-G Marines* breaks new ground

With continuous delays beginning to make us wonder if *X-COM: Alliance* will ever appear, it comes as a pleasant surprise that there is another space-squad combat game on its way. As the title suggests, *Zero-G Marines* takes place in a gravity-free environment, which some of you should be familiar with after playing certain *Unreal Tournament* maps. *Zero-G* also shares the first-person perspective but will also be the first game we know of to simulate a space suit, even if it is a futuristic combat one. In fact, developer Strategy First is keen to get the physics right, rather than come up with an arcade approximation, although there are bound to be concessions made in the name of gameplay. They've created their own fantastic-looking engine, so there's no danger of it being a *Quake III* or *UT* tweak. As well as providing some perfect deathmatching conditions, the game features a heavy amount of tactical gameplay. To add even further depth, you can use vehicles, too, making this a game to take seriously. We'll have to wait until the end of next year to see whether it can challenge the likes of *Halo*.

Either those suits are very thick or the characters belong to the Fat Corps.

THE TRUTH IS UP THERE

Adventure games dead? It's all a conspiracy

So there's this astronaut, see. And he's on this mission to the moon, see. And his crewmates have all been killed by unknown forces, see. And he's the saviour of the future or something, see. Well, no, obviously you don't see much and that's just the way *The Ward*, an *X-Files*-style adventure game from Fragile Bits Interactive, wants things to stay. Journey to the moon and beyond as you uncover a plot so labyrinthine and convoluted we can't even begin to pretend we understand a word of it.

In an interesting twist, the designers have created a *Blair Witch*-style website to accompany *The Ward*. As well as the usual puff about the game and its features, there's plenty of background on the story and characters, taking the form of UFO abduction reports and mission profiles. OK, it's not quite up there in the spoof documentary league with the low-budget horror classic, but it all adds a bit of colour.

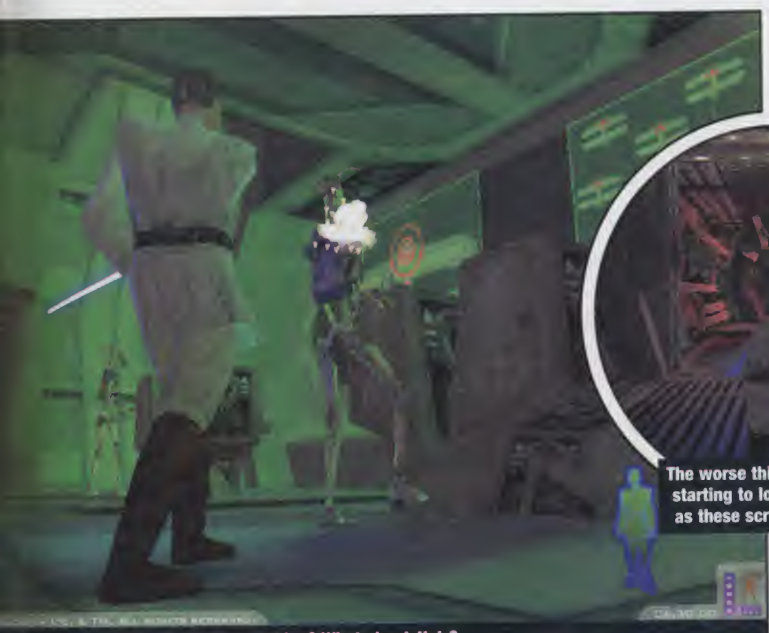
The Ward is supposedly finished already and just awaiting a publisher. Whether you've got money (and a distribution network) to burn or just want a look at the game, pay a visit to **www.fragilebits.com** and tell them we said "Hi".

Remind you of a certain film?

WAITING TO HAPPEN
What's the plan *2000AD*?
P.29

MAN WHO KNOWS
The latest industry gossip
P.30

HOTSHOTS
Brace yourself for some heavy-duty action in *Z: Steel Soldiers*
P.34



This won't work on your machine? What about *Halo*?

The worse thing is that it was starting to look much better, as these screenshots prove.

Can the last Jedi out please turn off the lights?

OBI-WAN STRUCK DOWN

LucasArts makes him more powerful than we can possibly imagine

Although we had been expecting it for some time now, LucasArts has finally broken the silence and admitted that the long-awaited *Jedi Knight* follow-up, *Obi-Wan*, has been officially cancelled – on the PC at any rate. "The expected breadth and scope of the *Obi-Wan* project could not be met given limitations of technology and the company's recently heightened quality standards," stated LucasArts in a press release, effectively slapping PC owners in the face by confirming that they see consoles such as the PS2 as superior machines. It did say, however, that it would continue to support the PC with other titles still in development, albeit technologically inferior ones apparently.

In accordance with any game being cancelled these days, fan reaction has been swift and predictable. An online petition was set up almost before the ink on the press release was dry, despite previous gamer-power efforts coming to naught (*Warcraft Adventures*, *Secret Of Vulcan Fury*, etc). The petition, containing more than 2,200 names at the time of writing, asks for a full explanation as to why the game has been cancelled and urges LucasArts to reconsider. "We have been led on and kept interested by an endless stream of previews and screenshots for the past year now, which have maintained our enthusiasm and support for the project... We want to remember LucasArts for their quality in computer game development, not for their disloyalty to their fans," it states.

It's unlikely to have any effect, but you can add your name to the protest by visiting **www.petitiononline.com/mod_perl/signed.cgi?ob1pc** and leaving your own views on the situation.

The cancellation is a strange one, coming so late in the day and with several previews of the game already having been written. Much was being made of the innovative use of mouse control for young *Obi-Wan*'s light sabre, a feature that can only be lost in the translation to a console's gamepad. Plus it's odd that LucasArts is pitching the "heightened quality standards" line so strongly, since a quick look at the most recent batch of *Star Wars*-inspired titles shows this hasn't exactly been one of the firm's strongest aspects of late. *Force Commander*, anyone?

In other cancellation news, the Internet was abuzz recently with the news that another long-awaited action title, *Max Payne*, had been given the chop by developer 3D Realms and publisher Gathering Of Developers. The furore started after rumours were printed at industry gossip site **FatBabies.com**. The news was seemingly confirmed by one of *Max Payne*'s developers on a message forum several days later. "It's not a rumour, it's true," said programmer Scott Miller. This was later retracted by G.O.D. head honcho Mike Wilson, who said "*Max* is alive and well and will be with you next year," and that Miller's comments were a joke designed to poke fun at the rumours.

Who's telling the truth? Who knows, frankly? Best we can tell, Max Payne is still on the go (just very, very due) and, until we hear otherwise, we'll continue to stick to that. However, it does make you want to throw your arms in the air and rail against the heavens sometimes, it really does.

Max Payne: still in development.

If God created all men equal, how will you get the upper hand?
MICROSOFT
SIDEWINDER
STRATEGIC COMMANDER
SideWinder® Strategic Commander raises the standard of strategy gaming, beyond expectations. Gain the competitive edge as you train, deploy and command your forces faster and more efficiently. Twist, spin and scroll around your gaming world and replace your complex keyboard commands with simple button clicks. Strategic Commander has no equal. Your time is now.
www.strategiccommander.co.uk
Microsoft
© 2000 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved. Microsoft, Strategic Commander, and SideWinder, are trademarks or registered trademarks of the Microsoft Corporation in the US and/or other countries.

Moats play an important part in any defence.

A fully working society is required for success.

GOD LAYS SIEGE

Firefly invites you to sweat it out

Sure, *Age Of Kings* had castles, but what purpose did they really serve? How many medieval fortresses could really be taken out by a handful of archers and a few swordsmen? Siege warfare has yet to be given its rightful place in computer gaming... until now! (*Couldn't see that one coming – Ed.*)

Stronghold, from Gathering Of Developers partner Firefly Studios, is part *Age Of Empires*, part *Sim City* and part *Shogun*. Players start with a handful of villagers and must begin constructing a castle structure as soon as the materials are in place. It's not just walls and weapons though – castles have to be self-sustaining, complete with bakeries, breweries, ironworkers, living quarters and towers. A fully working feudal society, in fact.

Of course, while keeping the citizens of your stronghold happy is of paramount importance, you mustn't neglect the military side. The game shifts into a higher gear once castles are attacked. No other game has boasted quite this level of siege warfare simulation before, complete with oil, scaling ladders, moats, underground tunnels, explosives and probably even a Trojan horse or two.

Stronghold is due for a late 2001 release and we'll bring you more news on it soon.

That'll be your gothic hellhole then.

Winged, spiked – it makes no difference in the end.

BEYOND THE WALL OF SLEEP

Ageing metal clown makes the interactive leap

Following on from the news that perennial one-man heavy metal freak show Ozzy Osbourne is to be the star of his own action title, hot on the heels of face-painting nutters KISS and permanent loon David Bowie, more details (and screenshots) have been released.

Developed by iROCK Entertainment, the action game takes place in a gothic hellhole place – where else – populated by winged things, spiky demons and other assorted denizens of the underworld. Details are scarce, but we're led to believe you have to 'fight' your way through each level by sporting various 'guns' of increasingly outlandish firepower and design.

Mr Osbourne will be penning tunes for the game himself, and hopes are running high that he'll put in more of an appearance in the game than the members of KISS did in *Psycho Circus*.

So why is it always action-heavy shooters that these rockers tend to go for? Are their egos so fragile that they couldn't be seen to lend their name to a *SimCity*-style game or a gentler-paced puzzle title? I mean to say, none of them are spring chickens any more.

Anyway, Osbourne's game will be on both PC and PS2 some time late in 2001. You have been warned.

SHORTS

GAMESBIZ

If you earn a living making games, you'll probably be quite interested in www.gamesbiz.net, a legal resource site for people in the industry. Developers seeking advice can now access professional help in the easiest way possible. You'll find financial information, articles on the industry and even a list of vacancies for those seeking a job.

FREE TENNIS

Freeloader has another game up its sleeves for those of you who like their games free and downloadable. *Tennis Antics* is a fun and simple version full of power-ups, special moves and err... cabin boys. Keep checking www.freeloader.com for more details.

SCHIZM

If you thought FMV adventure games were a thing of the past, think again. *Schizm* brings together the graphical adventure style of *Myst* with the second-rate actor-ridden style of *Phantasmagoria* in a futuristic fantasy setting. It sounds completely awful to us, but we could be completely wrong. Polish developer L K Avalon certainly hope so.

THAT'S A WRAP

Mummy's the word in this FPS with a twist

German developer Finarts is giving you the chance to quite literally act out a whole new role in the ever-growing world of 1920s-based Mummy resurrection 'em ups. *Ramnathep* takes the novel approach of being based on the bizarre exploits surrounding the filming of a *Mummy*-style adventure movie, with the player taking on the role of "world famous film star and womaniser" Ray Tracer. The twist being that Tracer is playing the lead role in the film – the 4,000-year-old Mummy Ramnathep.

Essentially, it's a first-person shooter, with the player having to pretend to be terrorising extras from Egyptian pyramids to New York subways. Along the way you'll have to contend with foreign legionaries, sacred crocodiles and Mafioso, all of whom want a share of Ramnathep's treasures. The storyline implies that the film's director, Toni Catatoni, is very much from the hands-off school of directing, allowing the 'actors' to improvise their way through scenes.

Weapons include Molotov cocktails, vast amounts of explosives and the use of two guns at once – "God gave us two hands, one for each gun". There is also the promise of slow-motion John Woo-style cut-scenes.

Ramnathep promises some original takes on a traditional genre, and we'll let you know how it's coming along over the next few months.

The weapons should be a bit more interesting than most.

You'll be able to use two different weapons at once – one for each hand (or stump...).

THE EVIL D

The original *Evil Dead* came out in 1982. Stephen King said at the time: "it's the most ferociously original horror film ever made".

UPDATE

COMPETITION

IT'S A SELL OUT!!!

Britain's premiere budget publisher is giving away its whole 2000 catalogue (22 games!) to one lucky *PC ZONE* reader. As well as offering you games at an affordable price, Sold Out is the only budget publisher to create its own user-friendly interface and provide full technical support. If you want to find out more pay a visit to www.sold-out.co.uk

Here's a full list of the games up for grabs: *Broken Sword 2, Championship Manager 2: Euro Leagues, Screamer 2, Army Men, Mass Destruction, Mutant Penguins, Screamer Rally, Uprising, Championship Manager 2: 96/97, Deathtrap Dungeon, Flight Unlimited II, Manic Karts, Myth, Requiem, Firestorm ThunderHawk 2, 3D Pets Vol 2, Grand Theft Auto, Might & Magic VI, Space Clash, Spec Ops, Tomb Raider* and *Worms United*.

QUESTION: Which Hollywood actress is playing Lara Croft in the *Tomb Raider* movie?

To enter, send a post card to:
Sold Out Software
122 Southwark Street
London, SE1 0SW

Alternatively, you can send an email to comp@sold-out.co.uk with "PC ZONE competition" in the subject line.

Each 'Deadite' will have a different skeleton, geometry, texture, animations and AI, apparently.

We've been told that the raping tree won't be making an appearance.

EAD KEEP ON RISING

More on the new *Evil Dead* game from THQ

UPDATE REPORT Paul Mallinson

When Heavy Iron Studios first announced it was working on a game based on the infamous *Evil Dead* series of films, horror fans the world over began whipping themselves up into a lathery paroxysm of ecstasy in anticipation of the results. Now, after approximately one year in development, Heavy Iron, and its publishing bed-partner THQ, have revealed more of this gore-laden hack, slash and shoot 'em up, much to our delight.

Evil Dead: Hail To The King will largely be action-based, coming across as something of a bastard son of *Resident Evil* and *Nocturne*, but with a strong undercurrent of humour underpinning the whole thing. The developer has come up with a novel way of rendering 2D backgrounds in spinny-rotatey 3D. It's hard to describe the effect, but it works extremely well and the graphics engine seems more than capable of replicating director Sam Raimi's hyperactive camera work as experienced in the movies.

Once again the infamous anti-hero Ash, voiced by Bruce Campbell (the original actor in the films), returns to battle the Kandarian demons that have plagued him since his first encounter with the Necronomicon (that's *The Book Of The Dead* to those who don't know) over a decade and a half ago. Mixing campness and authentic spookiness in equal measure, *Hail To The King* will see Ash fighting it out against 'Evil Ash', his bad boy alter ego as seen *in Army Of Darkness* (the third *Evil Dead* film).

In attempting to come up with gameplay that is not only relentless, but also rewarding, fun to play and – most importantly – not boring or repetitive, Heavy Iron has devised an ingenious combat system that allows combination kills to be stacked on top of each other for extra points, and 'finishing moves' to be enacted when an enemy is stunned or low on hit points (just like in *Mortal Kombat*).

"Don't be surprised when, after weakening a Deadite, Ash impales it on his chainsaw, sticks a shotgun in its mouth, shouts "Swallow this!" and pulls the trigger"

So don't be surprised when, after weakening a 'Deadite' monster, Ash impales it on his chainsaw, sticks a shotgun in its mouth, shouts "Swallow this!" and pulls the trigger...

Verbal taunts will actually play quite an important role in the game, as fans of the films would expect. Cries of: "Who wants some?", "You wanna taste it?", and "Gimme some sugar, baby" will not only sound good (and no doubt make us feel good), but will also affect enemy AI. Unfortunately for Ash, the results of this taunting can be unpredictable – some Deadites will actually get scared and run away when he speaks, while others might get enraged and become more powerful and deadly as a result.

More than 20 different Deadites are set to feature in *Hail To The King*, as well as an undisclosed number of 'bosses' (big, bad muthas that you simply *have* to beat to progress). Some of these have appeared in the *Evil Dead* films and some are new to the setting.

The *Evil Dead* universe, it must be said, is a perfect setting for a survival horror game (despite the fact that the *Evil Dead* movies don't fit together as a trilogy all too well – *Evil Dead 2: Dead By Dawn* being more of a remake of the first movie than a proper sequel). The eerie woods and the haunted log cabin of the first movie will feature heavily (something that *Evil Dead* owner Renaissance Pictures pushed for at the beginning of this project), and later on in the game Ash will also travel to Damascus to the time when the *Necronomicon* was originally scribed.

Evil Dead: Hail To The King is being described by some as a true sequel to the last *Evil Dead* movie – all of which is extremely encouraging to hear.

So, come April when the game finally hits PCs across Europe, we expect nothing less than a hilarious bloodbath of gigantic proportions.

Most of the early part of the game will be set in the log cabin. We'll no doubt have to go down to the cellar...

This should deliver all the chainsaw-mashing, double-barrelled shotgun totin', wise-cracking action you'll ever need from a survival horror game.

FOUNDPEOPLE

WIN!

WIN A 32MB 3D GRAPHICS CARD

GameLoft.co.uk

The new king of online gaming, Gameloft, has teamed up with 3D card manufacturer Guillemot to give you the chance to win one of five Hercules 3D Prophet II MXs. Just answer the simple question below and get those postcards in.

EACH PRIZE WORTH OVER £150!

PC ZONE has teamed up with new online gaming company Gameloft to give you the chance to win one of the most powerful 3D graphics cards around. The five lucky winners will also receive a merchandise bag full of goodies, courtesy of Gameloft.

Gameloft is the ultimate online destination for gaming enthusiasts, hosting and supporting a suite of the most popular games, including internally developed titles.

Plus, exclusive to GameLoft are **GameLive**, an exciting new community site dedicated to top-quality web-based games, and **Beatz 4 Geekz**, an independent online label and the first online community-driven website devoted to music created by gamers, for gamers. Check it all out at **www.gameloft.co.uk**.

THE PRIZE

Featuring NVIDIA's new GeForce2 MX chipset, the 3D Prophet II MX (reviewed in PCZ# 96) quite simply sets new standards in cinematic realism with breathtakingly fast movement. For both multi-textured 3D games and 2D Internet and business applications, it makes other graphics cards feel decidedly down to earth. In addition, the lucky winners will get a goodie bag each.

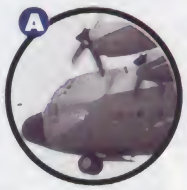
QUESTION:

Who or what is Hercules?

a) An aeroplane

b) A 3D card

c) A mythological hero



Just send your answer on a postcard, along with *all* the information requested below, to the address on the right.

- *Title, forename, surname, address, postcode, daytime phone number and your e-mail address.*
- *Please indicate on the postcard if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers from companies other than Dennis Publishing Ltd.*
- *Please indicate on the postcard if you are under 18 years of age.*
- *Please indicate on the postcard if you are you a current subscriber to* PC ZONE.

Send your entry to: Gameloft Hercules Competition CPCZ0101B, *PC ZONE*, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland St, London, W1P 5FF. (Closing date: January 11, 2001)

- *Terms and conditions: Only entries with all the questions completed and received before the closing date will be entered into the prize draw. Winners will be notified by post. No cash alternative. Prizes not necessarily as shown. No correspondence will be entered into. The Editor's decision is final. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply. And all that. Phew!*

Resurrection: Dominic watched the pigeon that had just shat on his head fly north.

DINAMIC IS FULL OF LIFE

The Spanish developer has yet more games in the line

Following reports of *Runaway*, an old-style adventure game, and *The Prison*, an online-only game, we've discovered a couple more Dinamic titles in development, namely *Grouch* and *Resurrection*. *Grouch* is a very cartoony hack-and-slash action/adventure, a sort of mix between *Severance: Blade Of Darkness* and *Dragon's Lair* with more than a touch of *Ecstatica* thrown in.

As you might be able to tell by both the screenshots and the name itself, *Grouch* doesn't take itself too seriously. The title character is a none-too-bright barbarian who believes the pen is mightier than the sword only when used to stab someone in the eye, which should make for an interesting range of puzzles. *Resurrection* is a much more serious and more attractive prospect. Once again, barbarians and their swords and chainmail are the stars, in a game that sounds like a 3D version of *Diablo*. You can choose to play as one of three characters or play through the whole story changing characters at the relevant moments. Each one has full RPG stats and displays the usual leaning towards fighting or magic. Gau, a typical warrior in the Conan mould, allows you to experience some true no-nonsense enemy hacking. Dominic is a demonic creature born from a young witch and demon father who has the ability to hide in shadows and rip gnomes' throats with his hands. Finally, there's the token girl, this time in the form of a priestess with mental powers that allow her to travel around in astral form and possess the weaker minds of her enemies.

Neither titles will be seeing the light of day until well into next year, and will only be seen in this country if a British publisher decides to snap up the rights.

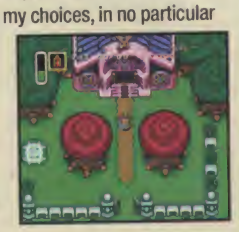
Grouch tries to use some convincing arguments to persuade a dragon to keel over.

DESERT ISLAND CDS

Warren Spector, the man behind *Deus Ex* and possibly the nicest person in the games industry, tells us what games he'd choose if he were marooned on a desert island with only a PC and unlimited power supply. (And as he's so nice a SNES and a Dreamcast as well!)

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST (SNES)

I'm assuming I don't have a modem or a broadband connection to the mainland, or else you'd see a bunch of multiplayer games here. With that proviso in mind, here are my choices, in no particular order other than the order in which they occurred to me. This is a favourite of mine. Few games have left me with the feeling I was engaged in something genuinely heroic. *Zelda* for the SNES did just that. The story was strong enough to carry me along without being so overpowering I couldn't play the game more than once. The characters were memorable, the puzzles challenging and the enemies required thought as well as twitch skills to defeat. But the *real* reason this is on my list is because, just hearing the music lowers my blood pressure. I don't know why, but I love the *Zelda* music. Plenty of games get my adrenaline pumping, but on a desert island I'm gonna need something that calms me down and keeps me from going bonkers. *Zelda* does that better than any other game.



TETRIS (Any Platform)

If you told me I could only take one game, this would be it. Is anyone out there tired of *Tetris* yet? You might as well say you're tired of Chess, Checkers or Go. I get as much pleasure out of *Tetris* today as I did the first time I played it – *Tetris* is just a miracle. Simple, addictive gameplay and infinite replayability make this a must-have desert island game. I bet I'd play more *Tetris* than anything else during my Robinson Crusoe adventure and I'd still play it, happily, after my rescue.

VIRTUA TENNIS (Dreamcast)

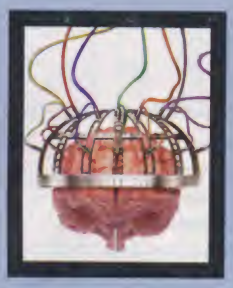
Has there ever been a better sports sim than *Virtua Tennis*? Damn, I love this game. I mean, as cool as some football, baseball and other sports sims have been, *Virtua Tennis* marks the first time I felt like I needed to read a book about a sport so I could do better in the game. Or, more impressive, you could play the videogame for a while and play better the next time you got out on a real tennis court. The more you play, the better you get. And it looks terrific – sometimes people have looked over my shoulder and asked what was on TV, not realising it was a videogame and I was playing it.

WARCRAFT II (PC)

Gotta have a strategy game. Tough call as to which one, though. *Civilization? Command & Conquer? Starcraft? Age Of Empires? Total Annihilation?* Nah. It's *Warcraft* all the way. Two sides to play and infinitely varied tactics to try give *Warcraft II* replayability in spades. But it's got something the others don't have – a sense of humour. Every other sim takes itself so bloody seriously. On a desert island, personality counts for a lot in a game and the loveable orcs of *Warcraft II* are a total win on the personality front. If I'm gonna be alone for a while, I want some friendly orcs with me. OK, boss… Zug Zug!

GRAND PRIX LEGENDS (PC)

I thought long and hard about this one. I knew I had to have a driving sim – something I could get better at and never have to worry about how good the opponents AI was. Even if it was just me, in a car, on a racetrack, I could always strive to better my personal best time. But which driving sim? I went with *Grand Prix Legends*, paradoxically, a game I'm really bad at. It's so damn realistic and so hard, it might take years before I mastered it – and on a desert island, a challenge like that could spell the difference between survival and an agonising descent into madness. So I guess, in the end, I went for replayability over pure pleasure or personal/professional impact, though all of the games on my list gave me a lot of pleasure. With the exception of *Zelda* for the SNES, the games on my list are the ones that give me the power to control my own destiny. These aren't games about solving arbitrary puzzles, reading a designer's mind or perfecting twitch skills, but games that offer real choices and opportunity for personal improvement. That's what gaming's all about, whether I'm sitting at home, in my office or living room, or stuck on a beach somewhere in the South Pacific…



TECHHEAD

The annual COMDEX show covered, plus the infiltration of fort Microsoft

GOING UNDERCOVER Carlos Ruiz

COMDEX RELIEF

The Las Vegas computer event played host to all the usual hardware heavies

Bill Gates was in the MGM Grand Garden Arena the night before COMDEX Fall 2000 to deliver a keynote speech about the future of the Internet. Instead of the passive, 'one-way' publishing model employed at present, Gates said he envisioned the Internet eventually evolving into a dynamic infrastructure connected by high-bandwidth computers and powerful software.

The ensuing presentation included a prototype of Microsoft's (www.microsoft.co.uk) Tablet PC – a high-spec handheld notepad incorporating the 'rich ink' feature, which allows users to scribble notes on the screen. The newest 'Whistler' Windows 2000-based operating system and Office applications, together with wireless connectivity, will provide huge amounts of functionality.

One of the more interesting new products on show was Creative's (www.creative.com) VoIP Blaster (Voice-over IP), which allows you to make free telephone calls over the Internet to anyone else who owns a VoIP. Compatible with standard corded or cordless telephones, the USB device can dial up VoIP-equipped PCs anywhere in the world – and thanks to the digital transmission, someone on the other side of the world will sound as clear as your next-door neighbour.

Since it uses only 12 Kilobits per second of bandwidth, you can surf the Net at the same time with no slowdown. It will probably also work fine while playing multiplayer games, although anyone serious about that type of thing would be well advised to get Microsoft's Game Voice instead.

NVIDIA (www.nvidia.com) was showing its new GeForce2 Go, a mobile version of the GPU for laptops. Nothing was said about next-generation graphics chipsets, although a deal with audio specialist Sensaura suggests that NVIDIA is looking to make inroads into other areas of hardware.

If everyone went out and bought a VoIP, BT wouldn't be pleased.

Matrox (www.matrox.com) kept its cards close to its chest regarding its next chipset, while 3dfx (www.3dfx.com) announced the cancellation of the much-delayed Voodoo5 6000 as a consumer product. With the VSA-100 technology looking more and more dated as time goes by, the 128Mb beast has finally been put to rest. In fact, 3dfx further acknowledged its downfall in the graphics market with news that it is switching back to selling chips to third-party manufacturers and licensing technologies to other companies.

FACTCANNON

NVIDIA. Although it's still a few months off, NVIDIA's (www.nvidia.com) upcoming NV20 chipset looks set to have performance levels of around 5.4GigaTexels/sec. Leaked info suggests a core speed of 300MHz, up to 128Mb of DDR RAM running at 200MHz, an AGP8x bus and a 256-bit memory bus allowing 12.8Gb/sec of bandwidth. Expect an official announcement in February 2001.

napster Rebellious MP3-sharing software outfit Napster (www.napster.com) has made a proposal to the RIAA in their ongoing legal saga, outlining a plan to charge users $4.95 a month to access the service. A large cut of the profits would go directly to record companies, to compensate for the alleged loss of earnings through MP3 activity on the Internet, and the remaining amount would go back to Napster.

SONICblue S3 has changed names to SONICblue (www.sonicblue.com), representing a new focus on digital media and Internet appliance opportunities. The company's 10-year involvement in the graphics industry was ended a few months ago, although owners of Diamond-branded hardware still retain existing warranties.

Seagate Seagate Technology (www.seagate.com) has clearly gone all out to impress with the Barracuda 180 – a single-drive hard disk with a capacity of no less than 180Gb, making it the largest in the world. Shipping in volume in early 2001, the Barracuda will be capable of storing around 400 full installations of today's top games, or 4,000 MP3s. Or the equivalent of a stack of text documents three times the height of the Empire State Building, if that's any help at all.

VISUAL INVASION

Microsoft was the victim of another high-profile hacking this year

Hacking is a perilous task at the best of times, with outcomes ranging from untold amounts of tax-free currency to the death penalty. Of course, a hacker's fate depends on many different factors, but the clever chap who got a look at Microsoft's most confidential files and source code a couple of months ago obviously saw justification in taking the necessary risks.

Experts believe an employee working at Microsoft received an email containing the QAZ worm concealed in an attachment file, and installed it without being aware of its true nature. The software then disguised itself as Notepad and sent a remote signal to a computer somewhere in Asia detailing the Internet location of the employee's computer. At this point in time, the QAZ worm could already have automatically downloaded and installed other hacking-related applications, making it easier for the hacker to gain access and control the target computer, as well as other computers in the same immediate network.

Microsoft say it has stepped up internal security since the incident.

Employee passwords were collected by the QAZ worm and sent to a Russian e-mail address, enabling the hacker(s) to pose as Microsoft employees accessing the computers from a remote location outside the campus. Sensitive areas of the network could then be accessed and important files viewed or downloaded.

Somewhat ironically, the QAZ worm was created using Microsoft's own Visual C++ programming language. The software giant's main concern is that the source code has been copied and may be used for serious financial gain in the future. The FBI (www.fbi.gov) is still on the case, and the official view is that no real harm will come as a result of the hacking.

PLAY ST ANDREWS OLD COURSE, CHATEAU WHISTLER, AND AVIARA IN SAN DIEGO, AS OFTEN AS YOU LIKE FOR A ONE-OFF FEE OF £29.99*

From a choice of six superb courses tee up and play stroke for stroke with some of the world's greatest players including Sergio Garcia. Links 2001's entirely new rendering engine gives you higher resolution landscapes including bunkers with overhangs, sheer cliffs, smooth fairways, and unprecedented ball physics. With the new Arnold Palmer Course Designer you can create your own courses using the same tools as the Links 2001 team. The ultimate golfing experience. **Play the best.**

*Anticipated street price

Book your course now

www.links2001.co.uk

CHARTS

Everything you need to know about which games are selling by the shedload. Plus the buzz on the streets – where you tell us what's hot and what's not

Champ Man at the top of the charts? Well I never...

THE Virgin megastores TOP 10

NOV	DEC	TITLE	DEVELOPER	PUBLISHER	SCORE
NE	1	CHAMP MAN 00/01	SPORTS INTERACTIVE	EIDOS	93%
NE	2	RED ALERT 2	WESTWOOD	EA	82%
3	3	WHO WANTS TO BE A MILLIONAIRE	HOTHOUSE	EIDOS	62%
NE	4	ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND	LUCASARTS	ACTIVISION	82%
NE	5	SUDDEN STRIKE	CDV	CDV	86%
NE	6	BALDUR'S GATE II	BLACK ISLE	INTERPLAY	85%
NE	7	FIFA 2001	EA SPORTS	EA	83%
NE	8	ZEUS: MASTER OF OLYMPUS	IMPRESSIONS	HAVAS	85%
RE	9	DELTA FORCE 2	NOVALOGIC	NOVALOGIC	63%
10	10	THE SIMS: LIVIN' IT UP	MAXIS	EA	63%

THE ChartTrack TOP10 ELSPA

NOV	DEC	TITLE	DEVELOPER	PUBLISHER	SCORE
NE	1	CHAMP MANAGER 00/01	SPORTS INTERACTIVE	EIDOS	93%
1	2	WHO WANTS TO BE A MILLIONAIRE	HOTHOUSE	EIDOS	62%
NE	3	RED ALERT 2	WESTWOOD	EA	82%
NE	4	FIFA 2001	EA SPORTS	EA	83%
NE	5	SUDDEN STRIKE	CDV	CDV	86%
6	6	THE SIMS	MAXIS	EA	86%
3	7	THE SIMS: LIVIN' IT UP	MAXIS	EA	63%
5	8	AOE II: THE CONQUERORS	ENSEMBLE STUDIOS	MICROSOFT	79%
NE	9	COMBAT FLIGHT SIM 2	MICROSOFT	MICROSOFT	87%
2	10	BALDUR'S GATE II	BLACK ISLE	INTERPLAY	85%

(Compiled by Chart Track © ELSPA 2000)

COMPETITION

WIN THE ENTIRE VIRGIN TOP 10!

***PC ZONE* and Virgin have teamed up to give you the chance to win every game in the current Top 10. All you have to do to enter the draw is answer this simple question:**

QUESTION: Which other version of *Championship Manager* came with its own editor?

Just answer the above question and send it on a postcard, along with *all* the information requested, to the address below.

- *Name / Address / Postcode / Daytime phone number / Email / Job title / Company name / Age if under 18.*
- *Please tell us if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers or new products from other companies.*
- *Are you a current subscriber to* PC ZONE*?*

Answers on a postcard to: *PC ZONE* Chart Compo (CPCZ0101A), Dennis Publishing, PO Box 154, Bradford BD1 5RZ. Closing date: Wed, 10 January.

Terms and conditions: Winners will be notified by post. No cash alternative. Prizes not necessarily as shown. No correspondence will be entered into. The Ed's decision is final. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply.

THE BUZZ ON THE STREETS

"I know it's the oldest cliché in the world, but my social life is once again totally in ruins, my girlfriend won't speak to me anymore and I've lost all interest in the real world. No, I'm not talking about *Championship Manager*, but *Red Alert 2*. Anyone who thought *Tiberian Sun* was poor should give it a go, you definitely won't be disappointed."

Andy Welsh, Orpington

"What? Only one RPG in the whole Top 10? Has the world gone mad? *Baldur's Gate II* deserves to be in the top five at the very least, and *Deus Ex* should have stayed at the top at least as long as *Half-Life*. Well, to hell with all of you, wizard-haters!"

Barry Topple, The Elven Woods

"It's pleasing to see a flight sim in the charts once more – I thought those days were long gone. I just can't wait to get my hands on *B-17 2*, especially knowing we're getting it before the Yanks."

Sean Cummings, Derby

"Having both *Championship Manager* and *FIFA* near the top of the charts sadly shows the PC venturing into console territory producing sequel after sequel, each one barely different to their predecessors. When will it stop – when we get to *Championship Manager 2450/51*?"

Dirk Mathews, Nuneaton

"When will people stop buying *The Sims* and get a real life instead of pretending to have one, or they could just buy *Baldur's Gate II* instead!"

Bernard Jolly, Cardiff

CHART COMMENT

BASED ON CHART TRACK TOP 10

It's all change this month with the influx of the Christmas biggies, and they don't come much bigger than *Red Alert* and *Championship Manager*. It's nice to see at least one original game – *Sudden Strike* being the only new arrival that isn't a sequel. The yule charts are as predictable as the contents of your Christmas stocking, and all we need is the new *Tomb Raider* game (it just missed out this month due to its release date) to complete the line-up. Another *FIFA* proves that it's not only PlayStation owners who buy sequel after sequel. Although, having spent all month playing *Champ Man 00/01*, perhaps I shouldn't complain too loudly. At least Chris Tarrant has been knocked off the top spot. And is *The Sims* ever going to go away?

Mark Hill

RETRO CHARTS

1 YEAR AGO...

1. Age Of Empires II *(Microsoft)*
2. FIFA 2000 *(EA)*
3. FA Premier League Manager 2000 *(EA)*
4. MS Flight Sim 2000 Pro *(Microsoft)*
5. Tiberian Sun *(EA)*

2 YEARS AGO...

1. FA Premier League Manager 99 *(EA)*
2. Grim Fandango *(Activision)*
3. Carmageddon 2 *(SCI)*
4. Caesar III *(Sierra)*
5. Railroad Tycoon II *(Take 2)*

5 YEARS AGO...

1. Hexen *(GT Interactive)*
2. Command & Conquer *(Virgin)*
3. Championship Manager 2 *(Domark)*
3. Rebel Assault *(Virgin)*
5. Ascendancy *(Gremlin)*

GRAPHICS

DATA

SOUND

SPEAKERS

CD-RW

Watch out
behind you
and in front of you
and next to you
and under you
and&

Live the experience

DOLBY DIGITAL

EAX

Forget ordinary audio – get connected to an incredible new dimension in Dolby® Digital 5.1 surround sound with the new range of Sound Blaster® Live!™ 5.1 cards. They're so good, they're approved by Dolby! Now add Dolby Digital speakers like our DeskTop Theatre™ 5.1 DTT2200 and you'll get the ultimate in acoustic excellence and sound that will surround you! Visit WWW.EUROPE.CREATIVE.COM

CREATIVE®

*Copyright 2000. Creative Technology Ltd. Creative and Sound Blaster are registered trademarks of Creative Technology Ltd. Sound Blaster Live! and DeskTop Theatre are trademarks of Creative Technology Ltd. Dolby is a registered trademark of Dolby Laboratories. All other brand names and product names are trademarks or registered trademarks of their respective holders.

The multiplayer side of the game could be its real strong point.

The spectacular battles take place in wide open areas.

PARADISE LOST

The makers of *Septerra Core* return with some angelic wrath in *Seraphim*

While Valkyrie Studios didn't set the gaming world alight with its traditional RPG *Septerra Core*, it looks like it's ready to expand into new ground with *Seraphim*, a third-person action title about fallen angels battling over who gets to rule Earth.

In the aftermath of the great battle in Heaven between the forces loyal to God and the rebellious angels, the Seraphim were cast down to our own hell-hole, to live as men and have a good old spat to keep themselves busy. The fallen angels are still immortal but, on exiting the gates of paradise, had a Lanuth stone affixed to their chest. When their bodies are destroyed their soul becomes trapped in the Lanuth, which explains why you can go around killing immortal enemies.

The look of the Seraphims is customisable and ties in neatly with the story. When they were cast from heaven, each sublime angel was physically transformed in accordance to their natures, splitting the outcast cherubs into three groups. The Demons are those who stayed defiant and vowed never to repent for their actions, and are characterised by leathery wings. The Angels asked for forgiveness and continue to pine for their lost grace; their wings are feathery. Finally, the Fey are the insect-like creatures who decided to leave the great war behind them and accept their fate as Earth dwellers. In the time-honoured tradition of fantasy strategy games, the angels need to draw their power, in the form of energy, from a chant that only humans can intone.

Although the game is very much an arcade blast of pure action, there are RPG elements to consider. There's a hint of *Flying Heroes* to the screenshots, but hopefully the whole thing will work better when it comes out next year.

A new way of wiping out enemies.

JAGGED EXPANSION

It's been a long time coming, but the popular squad-based game *Jagged Alliance 2* is to receive its first add-on pack by the end of the year. Going by the name *of Unfinished Business*, it is being touted as much more than an expansion for the original, offering as it does a host of new campaigns, persistent roster, map editor and greater RPG depth.

Developer Sirtech says that *Unfinished Business* will be less open-ended than *JA2*, with a much more focused story centred around a small country under attack from a mining corporation. Virgin should be publishing it in December.

MORE VALKYRIE PROJECTS

Seraphim may still be in need of a publisher, but the studio is already planning another batch of releases, which include *Witch Finder General* and *Dawn*. The first is a horror title set in the gentler, nobler and all more rational times of witch-hunting. Rather than find some poor old woman, tie stones to her feet and throw her into the river to see if she floats or not, the game involves fighting vampires, demons, werewolves and zombies in the good old tradition of the action/adventure genre. The twist is you can also take on the role of one of the monsters and you can switch from a third- to a first-person perspective. You'll have a number of characters to choose from who will gain experience and weapons with each outing.

Dawn, on the other hand, sees the *Septerra Core* developers returning to their traditional RPG roots. In fact, the game uses an enhanced version of the *SC* engine, with improved graphics, combat options and AI. Valkyrie is keen to allow you the freedom to experience the storyline in a non-linear way. You can play as the female warrior Aria or the male Zenon to explore an alien world in the ruined aftermath of a war. Both are yet to find a publisher and are only in the early stages of design.

The *Dawn* engine is certainly looking good.

Dawn must be a very cold game if her clothes are anything to go by.

SLEEP WITH THE FISHES

Waste management sim *Gangsters* gets the sequel treatment

"As far back as I can remember, I always wanted to be a gangster," says Ray Liotta at the beginning of *Goodfellas*, echoing the longing of men everywhere who walk in their minds with the swagger of a *Reservoir Dogs* character and can't help finding Tony Soprano likeable despite the fact that he's a complete bastard. 1998's *Gangsters* by Hothouse Creations did its best to make that male fantasy come true, casting you as the boss of a gang intent on taking over a city, but was too flawed to become a real classic. The advantage of making sequels to imperfect games is that you can listen to all the criticisms (from both the press and players) and make sure you don't repeat them. Hopefully, that is exactly what Hothouse has done.

As with the original, the action is set during prohibition times in America, and is consequently closer to *The Untouchables* than *The Godfather*.

One of the most important changes for *Gangsters 2: Vendetta* is the move from turn-based gameplay to real time, although you get to plan your moves twice a day, taking as much time as you want to think them over. And thinking carefully is extremely important considering that this time round there is more than just the one city to keep you busy.

No less than 15 of them need to be conquered to establish your racketeering empire across an entire state. To help you with this, *Gangsters 2* introduces a family tree, which simulates the hierarchy that dominates gangster culture and the careful balance of experience and skill needed to succeed. From your lieutenants to the smallest fish in the barrel, each member of your gang plays an important part in the proceedings. You'll be able to transfer some of your wiseguys to other cities, making sure nothing escapes your control. As you can imagine, each city is bustling with life and runs independently of your actions.

Some of the crimes you will be involved in include intimidation, bribery of public officials, extortion, gambling, gang warfare, liquor running and prostitution. Whether you choose to slip a judge a brown envelope or bust his nephew's kneecaps is entirely up to you and the type of mafia boss you want to be. What makes *Gangsters 2* such an interesting prospect is that almost every other character in the game has real presence, with their own skills, attitudes and ambitions. There are also special characters, usually hitmen, that will appear from time to time and who you'll be able to hire for a particular job.

Gangsters 2 is currently scheduled for release in January and will once again be coming courtesy of Eidos Interactive. If it doesn't, we'll make sure a couple of people get whacked. *Capisce*?

At night the cities aren't safe. Mostly because of you.

Click on the buildings to get more information on them.

Every Christmas send your wiseguys to church for confession.

Buildings become transparent when a hit occurs.

"This shirt was white when I put it on this morning."

fantastic games

100% FREE

freeloader.com

PC CD ROM

out 8th December

"A driving thrill to rival anything on the PC to date'

PC Gaming World

Fire up the world's best rally cars and drive them full-throttle through 90 new international tracks and 3 new countries

Floor the gas in all-new Arcade Rally and Rally Challenge multiplay modes

Authentic co-driver calls and **heart-stopping** graphics

Exceed your **pedal-to-the-metal** dreams in Championship alternate play mode or go **head-to-head** through LAN Network Play

sequel to the **No.1 Best Seller**

colin|mcrae|rally|2.0™

- step on the adrenaline

www.codemasters.com

© 2000 The Codemasters Software Company Limited ("Codemasters"). All rights reserved. "Codemasters"® and the Codemasters logo are registered trademarks owned by Codemasters. "colin mcrae rally 2.0"™ and "GENIUS AT PLAY"™ are trademarks of Codemasters. "Colin McRae"™ and the Colin McRae signature device are registered trademarks of Colin McRae. All Rights Reserved. "Colin McRae"™ and copyrights, trademarks, designs and images of car manufacturers and / or on car liveries featured in relation to the game, are being used by Codemasters under license. This game is NOT licensed by or associated with the FIA or any related company. All other trademarks or copyrights are the property of their respective owners.

Codemasters®

GENIUS AT PLAY™

WAITING TO HAPPEN

Stop press: Rebellion, Oxford-based developer of *Aliens Vs Predator*, has bought *2000AD*. OK, so it's old news, but that's never stopped *Richie Shoemaker* digging for a story

2000AD

Norts V Southers – there's a game right there.

I remember when I first read *2000AD*. The year was 1984 and I had the plague, or at least it felt like it. I was holed up in sick bay, upstairs in the boarding school where my parents thought it best I be left to spend my formative years.

Now, being sick at boarding school was a far less cushy prospect than being ill at home. Our matron (and you can forget the Kenneth Williams impersonations) presided over her domain with an iron rod, and her only methods of healing lay in her food preparation. Her jam sarnies were so thick with butter that you willed yourself back to health rather than spend eternity packing rolls of lard around your midriff. Still, her heart was in the right place – cushioned behind 57lbs of Lurpak.

And she had a stack of comics, most of which offered thrill power on every page. In fact, she even had issue #1 of *2000AD*. And issue #2, and a good few others. Enough, in fact, to ensure I bought as many issues as my pitiful wage would allow over the next five years until *Rogue Trooper* went arty farty.

Having been an avid reader of everything from *Whizzer & Chips* to *Warlord*, I was doomed into thinking that at the age of 13, comics were one of those childish things to be put aside during adolescence. *2000AD* was different however – it was adult. It had all the elements that appealed to me: humour, science fiction, violence and, above all, heroic characters that reflected the changing view of the world I was waking up to, characters that blurred the distinction between good and bad.

But it was the stories and artwork that captured my imagination. Stories like *Rogue Trooper*, a genetic infantryman bred to kill and sent to Nu-Earth where his entire battalion were massacred, betrayed by their own leaders. Then there was *Bad Company*, a story that played on the horrors of the Vietnam War, where undead zombies attacked relentlessly and hallucinogenic drugs permeated the atmosphere. Greatest of all was *2000AD's* favourite son, *Judge Dredd*, which if you haven't seen in print, you're sure to have seen on film (even if it was mostly rubbish).

Rubbish, too, were the few *2000AD* games that have been released. I remember a *Rogue Trooper* action game on the Spectrum, a *Judge Dredd* game on the Megadrive and... that's about it. If it wasn't for the *2000AD* licences, they would have been instantly forgettable.

But why? The storylines and characters are in place, the artwork all but scanned in, all that's needed is a 3D engine and surely we'd be there? Which is where Rebellion comes into the equation. Surely having bought the company, they'd be mad not to actually *use* it?

"The great thing about owning *2000AD* is that we get to do loads of games involving all these really cool characters," says Rebellion's co-founder, Chris Kingsley. "The problem is knowing where to start.

"Everyone we speak to suggests different characters, and we currently have more than 700 to choose from. Nice problem to have though, isn't it?"

Indeed, and a problem we intend to add to. Well, for starters, how about *Rogue Trooper*? A third-person mix of *Metal Gear Solid* and *Tomb Raider* where our genetically modified hero hunts down 'the traitor' who instigated the Quartz Zone Massacre.

> **"It was the stories that captured the imagination. Stories like *Rogue Trooper*, *Bad Company* and *2000AD's* favourite son, *Judge Dredd*"**

Chris agrees: "*Rogue Trooper* is definitely one of our favourite *2000AD* characters, and has to be at the top of anyone's list for a possible game. It would certainly make for a great game, combining *Metal Gear Solid* sneaking around and the enjoyable running around of *Tomb Raider*."

Top of the list, eh? Interesting. So here's another idea: *Bellywheel Racer*, an arcade racing game where you control one of *Mega City One's* obese élite and race through the skycrossed streets, picking up pies and getting larger and larger.

"Where did that idea come from? It is not really a game that immediately springs to mind!" says Chris.

"I'm not so sure how we'd get the feeling of speed as Ten Ton Tony Tubs is not exactly Linford Christie, except perhaps downhill. It would need very careful work on the physics to get the – literally – soft-body dynamics and collisions working realistically. I imagine that they'd be quite difficult to steer and not too good at cornering. We'd certainly get some spectacular crashes though!"

So there you go, you read it in *PC ZONE* first – *Bellywheel Racer* is the next game from Rebellion. *Gran Turismo* meets Giant Haystacks. My old matron would be proud.

Bellywheel Racer, it's the next big thing I tell ya!

£1.40? I remember when it was 1½ new pence!

Don't worry, Death ol' chap. You'll get a game one day, I'm sure.

THE GAME OF LIFE

The ***EverQuest*** community was rocked recently following reports that one of their number was driven to suicide by rogue postings on a discussion board. Staff at **Quellious Quarters** were led to believe that a 19-year-old woman who used the name **Leza,** killed herself after being dismissed as a volunteer customer service representative for contravening **Verant Interactive**'s rules about guides posting public messages. However, it appears that it was the work of an impostor, as it was soon amended with the sentence: "I got her fired!". Tributes to Leza flooded in, but police say that there were no incidents that could match the alleged suicide in the preceding weeks. Furthermore, all attempts to contact supposed relatives have proved futile, and the whole episode now appears to have been an elaborate hoax conducted by a goblin-fancying weirdo.

A storm has blown up over accusations that ***Earth 2150*** contains racist voice samples. A player, known only as **Panther**, claims that he was "assaulted by the sounds of whites doing their impression of a 'House Negro'! I must say that was the most blatant and ugly example of bigotry I've ever heard in a game!" **TopWare Interactive** has defended the game, with international sales director **Susanne Kiel** claiming: "First off, there was never any intention whatsoever to degrade, offend or make fun of any ethnic groups. A walk through the TopWare offices will make clear that assertions that the company is in any way bigoted are ridiculous. There are employees here from 12 different countries, with a variety of ethnic backgrounds. We have never before been the target of such accusations and do not intend to be in the future. We did not attempt to do an 'African-American voice'. It just so happened that the speaker is African-American and has a high-pitched voice. Though we feel that there are limits to political correctness, we have arranged to re-record the voice, remaster and issue a patch for all existing users who feel offended. In many games the bad guy speaks with a German accent. Being a German company, we are certainly the last people who would want to promote any stereotypes." Typical Germans.

And finally, **Radio One** DJ **Chris Moyles** says his personal life has been thrown into turmoil by the PC version of ***Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?*** The overweight unfunny man made the announcement live on air, explaining that his girlfriend ignored him in favour of playing the game by herself, only acknowledging his existence to demand more wine. The shocking confession was aimed at the outdated 'posse' of sycophants that make up Moyles' tiresome broadcast, but was also inadvertently heard by hundreds of listeners who forgot to turn their radios off following **Mark & Lard**.

CINEMAWARE RETURN FROM THE DEAD

Old-skool legends come swashbuckling back to the scene with *Robin Hood*

Anyone with even a passing knowledge of gaming's 'golden era' – ie the late '80s/early '90s – will surely remember Cinemaware. Pioneers of the 16-bit machine, games such as *Defender Of The Crown* and *It Came From The Desert* were the showpieces of the flashy new Commodore Amiga computer, as important to its future as games such as *Ridge Racer* and *Tekken* are to the PlayStation 2.

Now a whole new generation is set to experience Cinemaware's genius as the company makes a return to the industry after a ten-year absence with *Robin Hood: Defender Of The Crown*, an updated version of its first million-selling title. Cinemaware games was always hard to label due to its mixture of gaming styles and cinematic feel. *Robin Hood* promises to continue this tradition, containing role-playing, strategy, action and adventure elements – from jousting and archery tournaments to siege warfare and resource management of your merry men.

Presently Cinemaware is looking for a publisher to bring its traditional gameplay-orientated values to the PC, PS2 and Xbox masses sometime in early 2002. We'll let you know if they find one.

Stick a cow in it, that'll scare them.

A mixture of game styles is Cinemaware's forte.

GREAT GAMING CLICHÉS

We expose yet another of the gaming industry's worst crimes in the field of the cliché

#3 ADVENTURE GAMES ARE DEAD

Reports of the adventure genre's death have been greatly exaggerated. Like all apocalyptic, scare-mongering and unsubstantiated claims, this one is not strictly true, as a cursory glance at this month's reviews will prove. *Simon The Sorcerer 3D* might not be the genre's best bet at staying alive, but *Escape From Monkey Island* surprised us all by being very good and very funny.

Like the vultures they are, journalists can't help circling over the carcass of a failure, picking off bits of rotting flesh and generally pointing their finger and laughing. The adventure genre's failure has been not being able to produce more than one good game a year. In actual fact, this is probably a good thing, since they don't risk being lost in a sea of similar games.

The real problem is the public's lack of enthusiasm, making every new release a test to see how many copies it sells and whether or not another one will appear 12 months hence. At the same time, the genre has been absorbed and watered down by others, with almost every action and RPG game claiming to be partly an adventure. One things still remains true, however, old-style point and clicking is very dead indeed.

"Wait a minute, I'm not dead yet."

THE LATEST ON...

DUNGEON SIEGE

Microsoft's stunning RPG is coming along in leaps and bounds, and more and more details are treacling their way to us. The latest concerns the multiplayer aspect of the game, which apparently will only allow up to ten players to take part, a number which could even go down to eight. The reason given is to allow players with slower machines to experience less slow-down. Considering how advanced the graphics engine is, it doesn't surprise us that it would be almost impossible to host a massive game with dozens of players running around at once. The game is still scheduled to appear sometime next summer.

ONI

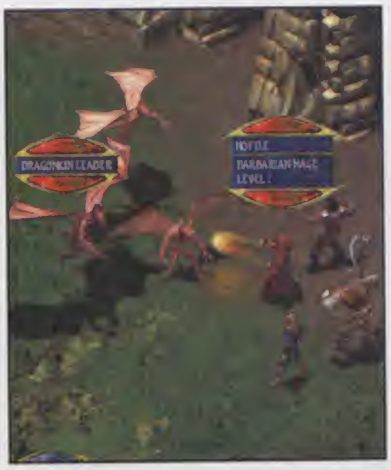
Although Bungie's third-person beat 'em up has been keeping quiet of late, it seems the game is almost finished and, with any luck, we should be reviewing it next issue. You shouldn't be put off by the anime-style graphics, because there is some serious bone-crunching action on offer. The hand-to-hand combat offers a wealth of moves, but you will also be using a formidable arsenal of weapons. Despite the fact that it's also set to appear on a number of next-gen consoles, you'll be glad to hear it's not a gamepad or keyboard-only game, and you'll be able to use standard FPS controls. Expect it to become a popular multiplayer title.

UNDYING

When a writer of the calibre and imagination of Clive Barker decides to try his hand at games, it's time to sit up and take notice. He's already had great success with novels, films, comics and plays, so there's enough evidence to suggest that at least the concept and story will be good. Apparently he has been working closely with the developers, coming up with characters and ideas all the time. There are more than 30 weapons, spells and magic items, and you can go from using a revolver to a Mindshatter spell as if it were the most natural thing on earth. Hopefully, we can bring you a more in-depth look at the game very soon.

HALO

There's been very little news leaked out of Bungie headquarters on their highly anticipated and possibly ground-breaking title. Over the last few months dozens of fan sites have closed down and public perception is probably suffering after the change of publisher to Microsoft and all the speculation about it being an Xbox-only game. With such an ambitious project, there's always going to be some hiccups along the way, but we can assure you it's right on track. One new tidbit of information we have managed to gather is about AI's fear factor. Apparently enemies will only chase you depending on how dangerous it thinks you are, which sounds pretty cool.



POOL OF RADIANCE: RUINS OF MYTH DRANNOR

Although originally slated for an end-of-year release, *Ruins Of Myth Drannor* won't be ready until sometime early in 2001. Mattel has said this is due to "internal business issues", but we're sure that developers SSI will grab the opportunity to invest more time polishing its RPG off with both hands. The internal business alluded to is no doubt The Learning Company's take-over, but at least the new owners haven't decided to can the project. Instead, it looks like SSI will undergo some changes itself, with a new name being one probability. Hopefully, this won't affect the quality of their game.

ALONE IN THE DARK: THE NEW NIGHTMARE

Another game to suffer a slight delay is the sequel to one of the best-loved series in computer titles. There are no sinister reasons for the slippage, other than Darkworks insistence on delivering a quality, bug-free game. Because *The New Nightmare* is multiplatform (PlayStation, Dreamcast and even Gameboy Colour), co-ordinating a simultaneous launch will be quite tricky. The new release date is April 2001 which, considering the imminent arrival of the PS2, must raise some worries about the appeal to console owners of what is essentially a PC brand.

TICKER TAPE

STARTS++ We got all excited this month about the possibility of a new *The Great Escape* game being unleashed by SCI (remember it is also working on *The Italian Job*). Everyone old enough still has fond memories of the Spectrum title, but SCI has announced it's going to be a console-only game. Damn! ++STOP++ In a connection between games and the US military that goes way back to the days of the original *Battlezone*, it seems the army is using the *Delta Force: Land Warrior* engine to create its own realistic warfare simulator. Not wanting to feel left out, West Point, the US Military Academy, has put in an order of exactly 1,040 copies of *Steel Beasts*, the tank simulator from Shrapnel Games. We sincerely hope that the games industry feels very dirty. ++STOP++ Razorworks, developer of the fantastic chopper-sims *Apache Havoc* and *Apache Hokum*, has been acquired by Empire. Since Empire has published its past games it shouldn't make too much of a difference, although you can rest assured its next game won't involve helicopters, aeroplanes or anything that flies. ++ENDS++

The Fairytale
is Over

Once upon a time there was a little girl called Alice who got lost in a place called Wonderland. But that was long, long ago, when the world was a happy and innocent place. Now things have changed. And so has Wonderland. Now you have to be ruthless if you want to survive, you have to kill if you don't want to be killed. And this time your attempts to destroy the vicious and evil Queen of Hearts will be supported by the new and improved version of the Quake 3 engine, the best 3D action environment yet created. So welcome to a twisted and sinister new dimension. Welcome back to Wonderland.

American McGee's

ALICE

PC CD

ROGUE

www.alice.ea.com

www.uk.ea.com

EA GAMES

© 2000 Electronic Arts Inc. All rights reserved. Electronic Arts, EA GAMES, the EA GAMES logo, and American McGee's Alice are trademarks or registered trademarks of Electronic Arts Inc. in the U.S. and/or other countries. All rights reserved. EA GAMES™ is an Electronic Arts™ brand. Rogue Entertainment and the Rogue Pirate Logo™ are trademarks of Rogue Entertainment, Inc. All rights reserved.

HOTSHOTS

The sequel to the original British RTS is soldiering its way to you

Z: STEEL SOLDIERS

Codemasters • Out March

After a lukewarm reception on the PlayStation, it looks unlikely that we'll be seeing the new *Speedball* game on PC any time soon, but the Bitmap Brother's title everyone is holding their breath for is *Z: Steel Soldiers*. While Westwood has been cleaning up with its *Command & Conquer* and *Red Alert* franchises, the British developers have been biding their time and preparing something that will truly blow all strategy fans away. A lot of thinking has gone into its development and the Bitmaps are certain to throw away the old RTS routines in favour of something more original. We'll bring you a more in-depth look at *Steel Soldier*'s features in next month's exclusive preview.

www.typeordie.com

SEGA

"... challenging and excruciatingly tense"

"It's this kind of innovation that keeps gaming fresh"

PC Gamer

HERE LIES HARRY HARRIS COULDN'T TYPE TO SAVE HIS LIFE

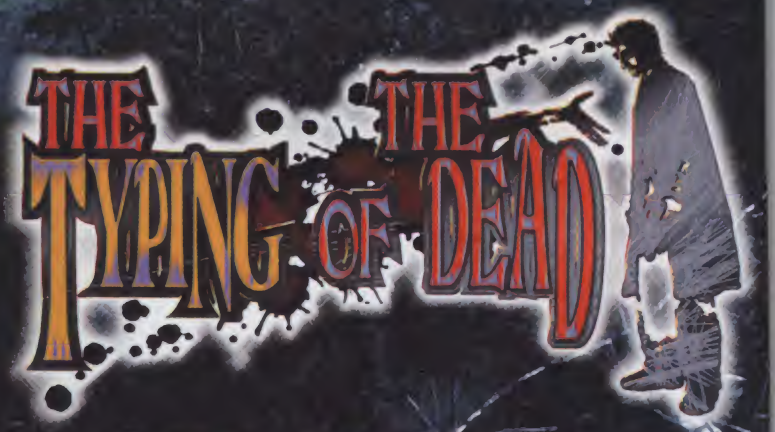
All the horror of the best-selling HOUSE OF THE DEAD series.

† 5 Game modes including, Boss, Arcade & Drill.

† 12 putrid zombies including the chainsaw wielding Max and the perpetually rotting Ebitan.

† Co-operative multi-play across LAN.

† 6 chapters, 12 drills, and 5 difficulty settings and hidden "secret" levels.



type or die

SEGA

©SEGA CORPORATION, 2000. THE TYPING OF THE DEAD is a registered trademark or trademark of SEGA CORPORATION.
Published by Empire Interactive Europe Ltd.

empire INTERACTIVE

MAILBOX

Stereotypes, there must be more to life. Not this month, no...

ANSWERED BY Richie Shoemaker

CONTACT INFO

Write to us, and if your letter is selected as Letter Of The Month we'll send you a prize.

WRITE TO Mailbox, *PC ZONE*, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF

EMAIL letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk

CHAT FORUM If you've got something pressing to say, check out the 'lively' chat forum on our website. Point your browser at **www.pczone.co.uk** for further info.

SUPER PRIZES TO BE WON

For the next few issues of *PC ZONE*, we will be giving away a Microsoft IntelliMouse to everyone who gets a letter printed in Mailbox. These digital rodents are perfect for 3D shooters and games that require a quick and precise response from your pointing device – you can even use them with Windows 98 if you really want to. So get your writing skates on and send us your literary masterpieces. We promise not to be rude when we reply to them. Well, not very.

"Why does one of the most cerebral and enlightened magazines allow such disturbing portrayals of women within its pages?"

STUART GRANGER OBJECTS TO LAST MONTH'S *GRAVIS* ADVERT

SEXIST? CORSET IS

Being a female number-one-fan of *Half-Life*, *System Shock 2* and *Quake II*, I consider myself to be extremely violent. I read the letter from Rob Slade in the Christmas edition of *PC ZONE* with total disgust and disbelief. Surely, in the 21st century, anti-female men like him belong in zoos or museums? I find it really difficult to believe that this kind of Stone Age sexism still goes on today. Do men want us to wear whalebone corsets too?!

Being a blood-and-guts lover, I hope Mr Rob Slade is now realising his mistake in supplying us with the name of his home town. This is for you, you sexist bastard. We know where you live...

Abby Harrison, Ceredigion

Whalebone corsets, hmm. But seriously, the chap lives in Hull – what would you expect?

SMELL THE GLOVE

I was glad to see the issue of sexism raised by Alex Young, as it is a disease that has been dogging the gaming world since the days of *Game Over* on the eight-bit platform (a game whose advert displayed two of the biggest tits this side of the US Presidential elections).

I was particularly disgusted not by Rob Slade, whose immaturity can be forgiven, but by you guys at *PC ZONE*. I refer specifically to the appalling advert for *Gravis*, which featured a scantily clad woman as a puppet, with the statement: "Imagine if you could control your life as well as you could control your gaming destiny with *Gravis*."

How can people like Alex even hope to achieve a level footing with other male gamers when one of the most cerebral and enlightened magazines around allows such truly disturbing portrayals of women to be published within its pages?

Normally, games such as *Heavy Metal: FAKK 2* just make me laugh, and I would hardly call myself a feminist, but do we really need these adverts in the year 2000?

Stuart Granger

We don't have much say when it comes to what adverts appear in the mag. They are commissioned, written and designed by marketing people whose job it is to play on stereotypes, and the stereotypical image of gamers is of a male, pock-faced and sexually repressed lad thrashing his hardware in solitary confinement.

Secondly, you can hardly call the ad 'truly disturbing'. *Animal Farm*, now that's disturbing.

THANK YOU, GOODBYE

I think there should be a cheat for *Unreal Tournament* that turns all the other players into Ann Robinson lookalikes (the Olde Betch off *The Weakest Link*). That way you could fulfil everyone's dream – of shooting her!

Daniel Morley, Cornwall

Yes, that would be hilarious. Well done.

LIGHTWEIGHT BOXING

Back in the halcyon days when summers lasted forever and Spangles were eaten like they were going out of fashion, I recall visiting my local software emporium at a tender age and being bedazzled by the collection of oversized boxes on display. Each box, on whatever format, was an inch or more in thickness, stacked neatly on groaning shelves resembling colourful breeze blocks awaiting transfer to a building site down Las Vegas way. I used to marvel at these huge boxes, the sheer size demanding that I pick up one title over another, not for what was on the cover, but for the promise of the delights to come from within each cavernous monolith.

I also remember feeling cheated every time I got home. On opening the box I would find a mere one floppy disk, one registration card and a flimsy photocopied manual. Oh, and enough empty space to house a family of four on a camping holiday in Wales (unless it was a flight sim, then you also got a manual the size of the Argos catalogue).

Still, that didn't dishearten me. I went back week after week and purchased more and more cardboard breeze blocks. I never desired to throw any away, and my garage became stacked high with the things.

Yesterday, I went into Dixons and saw the future of PC packaging – the DVD case. *Red Alert 2* and *FIFA 2001* glared down at me, and it took me a moment to realise that I wasn't in the video section; this was computer software. I must admit to feeling a pang of sadness, and I even thought of not purchasing the latest *C&C*, even though I'm a dyed-in-the-wool RTS fan.

Big, cumbersome, PC boxes... a pain to carry, hell to stack in a pile of 15 without toppling over, and next to useless once they're empty – but I'll still miss you.

Rajiv Awasti, London

Any man with fond memories of Spangles is a friend of ours. Remember Pacers? Metal Mickey's Atomic Thunderbusters? Woodbines? Oh, to be 11 years old again...

On the subject of the new DVD-style packaging, we have only good things to say. Like many of you we have games cupboards full of near-empty cardboard boxes, half of which rip every time you try to get anything out of them and then collapse when you stack them.

This is the future of PC games packaging. Yeah, whatever.

Hopefully, it won't be long until every publisher is releasing DVD-packaged games and there'll be a wider choice in shops and much more space in their (and our) bulging shelves.

CHARGE OF THE TIGHT BRIGADE

While waiting with anticipation for the imminent arrival of the next issue of *PC ZONE*, I thought I would email you regarding your review of *Mindrover*. I had briefly seen a mention in a Linux mag and assumed it was a Linux-only game in development, so was surprised to see your review of a Windows version.

I downloaded the demo, which I found good enough to persuade me to part with some hard-earned credit (US$35 for the game, plus $6 for P&P = $41, which is approximately £29).

However, when the game arrived from across the pond I ended up shelling out another £6 for Customs Duty and GPO, raising the overall price of my purchase to £35. Annoying or what!

But as far as the game is concerned, your rating of 80 per cent was spot on.

Darren, via email

On our online travels we have found many games that are released in America or exclusively online that would probably never find their way onto UK shelves otherwise, which is why we try and get these games in for review whenever we can.

As to the price of ordering these games, because Customs don't always sniff through every package, we tend not to add the charge for Customs Duty into the price quoted in the review. When they do poke around our mail sacks however, it can be maddening when they slap on a massive charge. More than anything else it negates the reason for buying from the US in the first place.

PCS 4 EVER

I'd like to comment on the letter from Paul Boland featured in your December edition of *PC ZONE*. He states that with all the new consoles and console-only titles coming out, the PC is going to die. What he needs to think about is what PCs were designed for in the first place.

The majority of families in Britain own a PC because it can be used for work as well as play. It is true that newer consoles will have Internet capabilities, but will they allow you to scan, edit and print documents? Parents will buy a PC primarily for its use as a multimedia tool (most off-the-shelf PCs today come with a myriad of software titles). The games just follow on.

It is true that PCs are more expensive, but while they continue to have few competitors in the home office field, they will thrive as a games platform. Couple this with their upgradability, versatility and power, and you'll find that the PC is not, and may never be, doomed.

Shortypaul, via email

We couldn't have put it better ourselves, or we could but we would have to pay someone to do it.

Interesting that you say the PC can be used for work, to scan, edit and print documents and the like. Does anyone actually use their PC for this kind of activity? Thought not.

You're not safe from the taxman, even if you buy from abroad.

LETTER OF THE MONTH

GOODIES WINNER!

A JOURNALIST WRITES

Once again, *PC ZONE* uses a preview of a gory game (*Severance* #96) to launch a typically glib defence of videogame violence. You pick out one screenshot for particular derision, claiming that "sensationalist websites like these cause hysteria in the press".

But let's look at what the screenshot said: "What if the representation of violence reduces mayhem and murder to an experience designed to entertain?" This strikes me as both palpably true and a valid question to be asking. The surprising thing is that it's never the trade press that asks it.

It's easy to despise the National Rifle Association for its ostrich-like defence of handgun proliferation, namely "people cause murder, not guns", but defending videogame violence out of principle is equally irresponsible. Sure, we all like playing *Quake III*, but in the same way that we're concerned about radiation from mobile phones, wouldn't you also like to know if game violence was having other pervasive effects? This is not an issue to get defensive about; it is one to be explored in depth.

It is time the industry funded its own, extensive research into the effects of interactive violence on users, and a responsible games press should be calling for the same thing. There are also commercial reasons for doing so – for instance, the vast majority of females who shun videogames out of aversion to the aggression portrayed. In fact, the biggest danger of violence is that it could be depriving publishers and games designers of a larger audience.

What both opponents and defenders of this issue need is hard evidence, or failing that, sensible discussion of the subject. If you're right, we can carry on shooting gibs out of each other with a clear conscience. But what if you're wrong?

A games fan can afford to ignore this possibility. A journalist should not.

Mike Anderiesz, a journalist

Like many people I am a mobile phone user, an occasional smoker and a heavy gamer, and the effects each has on my health are certainly of interest to me.

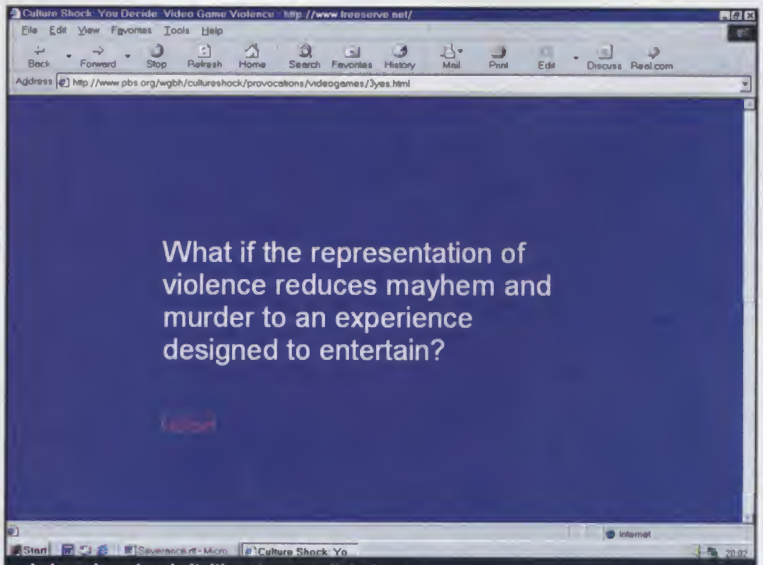
However, as a games player, I know that indulging in virtual violence is never going to turn me into a psychotic killer. Being gang-raped by gorillas might, and if it ever happens, I'm sure that the hours invested in *Counter-Strike* will come in handy when I go on a spree.

That being the case, do you think I should be allowed to play violent games? After all, there's nothing to say that at some point in my life, an event too horrible to contemplate could turn mild-mannered nice guy Richie into a crazed maniac.

To be honest though, I'm not that interested in the psychological effects gaming might have on me. Like most people I want to play good games, not violent games, and I'm much more concerned about the physical effects typing might have on my joints, or light from a monitor might have on my eyes.

I'm talking here as a games fan and as such, it's the people who aim to take that fun away who make me angry, especially when their views are fuelled by a sensationalist tabloid press, which continually paints gaming as a hobby undertaken solely by children.

As a journalist, of course I agree with you wholeheartedly – it's an issue that should be explored in depth and we welcome the fact that it is a subject of many studies being undertaken worldwide. And when they're complete, I'll happily read them and probably carry on gaming regardless. Probably.



...but you have to admit, it's not very well designed.

How
o you put
the magic
ack in her
life?

Show
her your
wand!

Simon the Sorcerer 3D

Simon is back...

Real-time 3D adventure with over 60 Characters to interact with.

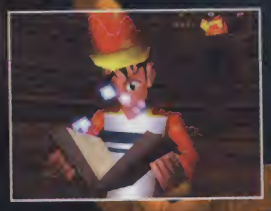
Have fun with the ribald jokes, sly humour and 'off the cuff' quips.

Complex, humorous and highly entertaining story line.

3D Sub-games — Gnome Firing Competition, Tight Rope Walking, Darts, Climbing, Crazy Golf and More.

Enjoy discovering the surroundings with mentally challenging puzzles.

Visit highly involving and immersive locations.



www.simon3d.com

MICROPROSE

www.microprose.com

HASBRO Interactive

headfirst

© 2000 Hasbro Interactive Inc. All rights reserved. © 2000 Headfirst Productions. All rights reserved. Published by Hasbro Interactive Inc. Developed by Headfirst Productions.

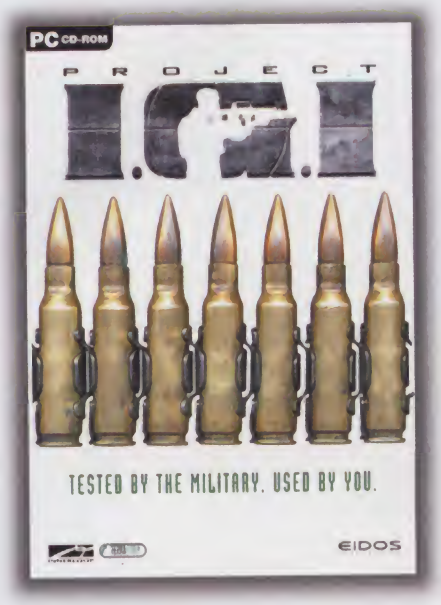
Sound and
with Tea
STC

M203 GRENADE LAUNCHER
Length 380mm; barrel 305mm
Weight 1.63kg (loaded)
Calibre 40mm
Muzzle Velocity 75 metres per second
Cyclic Rate Single shot, pump action
Effective Range 400 metres

A breech loading, pump action single shot grenade launcher. Provides grenade launching capability without any loss of squad fire.

PCZONE

"...the PC game GoldenEye fans have been waiting for"



TESTED BY THE MILITARY. USED BY YOU.

PC CD-ROM TERRAFORM INNERLOOP EIDOS INTERACTIVE
eidos.com

Project IGI™ Developed by Innerloop Studios Limited. © and Published by Eidos Interactive Limited 2000. All Rights Reserved.

Reheating the Cold War in...

OPERATION FLASHPOINT

The Status Quo title may have gone *over the edge*, meaning lots of easy intro jokes *can't be done*, but Paul *'Wanderer'* Presley *ain't complaining*. He's *in the army now* and going *down, down, deeper and down*

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Bohemia Interactive Studios
PUBLISHER Codemasters
WEBSITE www.bistudio.com
OUT Easter 2001

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Complete military simulator – from troops to tanks, and from jeeps to jets
- Huge, sprawling levels allowing total freedom of action
- Advanced AI routines for realistic combat encounters
- Play as a lone soldier or command whole squads

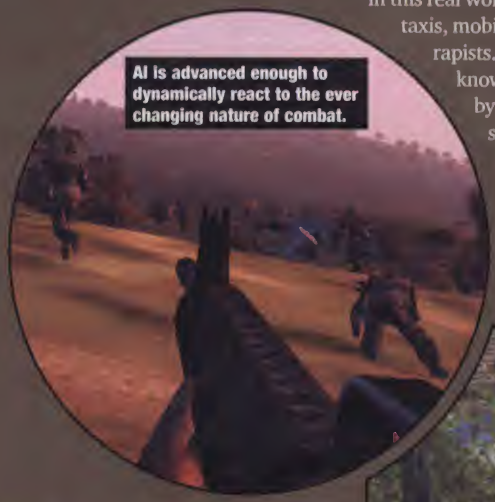
You learn some useful things playing computer games. Thanks to *Operation Flashpoint*, I now know how to navigate using the stars, although I'm not exactly sure how much use it will ever actually be to me in this real world of *A-Zs*, late-night taxis, mobile phones and helpful rapists. That is to say, I now know how to locate north by finding the saucepan-shaped Big Dipper constellation. Which will be great the next time I'm on a weekend yomp, but probably as much use as a salad fork in Texas the next time I'm staggering home from the Cow & Abattoir after a Friday night social engagement.

But that does show how much thought and design Czech-based Bohemia Interactive Studio is putting into the total combat simulator that is *Operation Flashpoint* (previously known as *Flashpoint 1985: Status Quo*, in case you were wondering what all the dodgy song references in the intro were about). Indeed, night-time navigation is just one of many training missions and it is odd to think that I'll have less trouble finding the stroppy commanding officer running around in a pitch-black forest than I would were I given a map, a compass and a jeep and told to drive from point A to point B.

Actually, watching the jeep lesson was when the full impact of what *Flashpoint* is trying to do really hit home. 'Total freedom' is one of those claims that game designers are often making and the truth is often less impressive than the boast would have you imagine.

But there you are, getting hopelessly lost in some part of France, stopping every 200 yards or so to hop out of the jeep and check a road sign, when suddenly you hear a loud bang somewhere just over the next hill. You scramble back into the jeep and decide to check it out.

Cresting the hill, you're surprised to see a couple of friendly tanks, one burning away, guns trained on the horizon, and a squadron of



AI is advanced enough to dynamically react to the ever changing nature of combat.

Tanks require a bit of teamwork to operate, especially in multiplayer.

CV

Bohemia Interactive STUDIO

BOHEMIA INTERACTIVE STUDIO

Czech these guys out (*Terrible – Ed.*)...

2001 *Operation Flashpoint* is BIS's first title, having been in development since 1997. Let's hope it's not their last.

You do get to fly these, eventually. Mostly you just order them in from the ground to assist in attacks.

Of course, stealth is all important at times.

Realistic flight models aren't the order of the day, so don't be put off if you're not a flight sim fan.

soldiers running about trying to take up positions. Swerving the jeep off the road, you jump out and dash over to a couple of your comrades, and hit the deck as another shell explodes nearby.

It's at that point in the demo that the thought hits me – none of this actually needs to be happening. It's just a training level in the game, learning how to drive a jeep. You don't even need to take this turning and probably wouldn't have seen any of this if you hadn't actually got lost in the first place.

There's a world going on here, regardless of what you're up to and if you want to just hop in a jeep, jump into a passing truck, hitch a lift on a cargo helicopter or even hijack a local farmer's tractor and drive anywhere you want to, you can. Impressive stuff.

BELIEVE WHAT YOU SEE

Astonishingly though, this is actually a bit of a bodge, according to Bohemia's lead designer Marek Spanel. "Originally, we wanted to create just one world with a real war on it," he confides. "Later, we saw it simply wasn't enough fun so we moved to a more conventional method with pre-designed missions. Strong aspects of freedom and unpredictability still remain in the game, but the campaign itself is just a series of missions with some non-linear points involved." Fooled me.

> **"*Flashpoint* is perhaps the first game that truly has NPCs who move and act like real humans, putting so-called advances in AI seen in your *Quakes* to shame"**

The other remarkable thing about the game engine is just how believable the AI is. *Flashpoint* is perhaps the first game that truly has NPCs who move and act like real humans, putting so-called advances in AI seen in your *Quakes* and your *Unreal Tournaments* to shame.

"The AI is good," agrees Marek, modestly. "It allows all units to perform almost independently on the battlefield. I don't want to go into too much detail now, but the player can be subordinated to an AI leader or command his own AI soldiers. This requires a very solid AI background because the player actually sees all his units performing his orders alongside him. Either that or he's listening to

Q&A

MAREK SPANEL

The main man behind Flashpoint *and a chap who certainly knows the value of a good Kalashnikov when he sees one.*

PCZ What was the first game you ever played?

MAREK It's hard to remember, but I think it was an early '80s Soviet clone of *Pong*. Or it may have been this great military shooting game – something like *Operation Flashpoint* but with helicopters and tanks designed using ASCII characters set on a plasma display – on one of the very few US mainframe computers in the country at that time.

PCZ What are your favourite games of all time?

MAREK *Pitfall II* on the Atari 800, *Another World* on the Atari ST and *Little Big Adventure* on the PC. The whole *LBA* series actually – I can't explain why – and I am still waiting for the next part of it. It's been a long time since *LBA 2*, I have to say...

PCZ Why did you drop the name Status Quo from the title? Was it anything to do with the denim-clad rockers?

MAREK You're in the army now, woah ah, you're in the army... Actually it wasn't anything to do with the band. 'Status Quo' was in the title during the time we were trying to find a publisher because it was a real status quo for our team.

PCZ What's the most bohemian thing you've ever done?

MAREK Maybe drinking wine on the top of a ruined castle tower deep in a forest in the middle of Bohemia. Or going to a VIP party at last year's computer trading show here in the Czech Republic wearing a Soviet paratrooper uniform with some other people from Bohemia Interactive, drinking most of the wine they had there.

PCZ When it comes to stopping power, which is the best kind of gun to use?

MAREK It depends. If I really need to have a weapon, I would personally prefer a Czech version of the Kalashnikov – a very simple rifle with strong firing power.

PCZ Have you ever been in a fight? If so, what happened?

MAREK Except for one year of national service in the Czech army, I live a very peaceful life and my guardian angel is doing a great job so far. I remember some very dangerous situations, but it's not really a good idea to fight if there's a knife at your neck. Honestly, I don't like fighting.

The vehicles in the game range from the mundane, such as this truck, to the exciting, such as tanks and planes.

There's a whole world going on around you – skirmishes, supply runs, civilians, etc.

The interiors might not be the most detailed, but they are in full 3D.

the orders of his commander and having to make sense of the changing situations. In the multiplayer game, we had difficulties recognising who is AI and who is human."

This realism extends to the physical nature of units. It's par for the course these days to say that a military simulator has amazing graphics, but when you consider just how ambitious in scope *Flashpoint* is, letting the player control everything from foot soldiers to cars to tanks and even helicopters, you'd forgive Bohemia for skimping a little on the visuals. While it's true that the interiors of vehicles rely on the slightly dated 'painted texture map' method, the exteriors are very detailed indeed. The real beauty though, is in the human models. When you first see them, you think they're moving a little peculiarly. They seem to run a little bow-legged. But after a few minutes, watching how smoothly the joints move, how there's none of the polygon break-up you sometimes get at the shoulders and hips in 3D models, it suddenly looks more realistic than anything you've ever seen before. And you realise just how *un*believable all other 3D games are.

BACK IN THE USSR

Anyway, we haven't really gone into the game's background. The Cold War is proving to be a popular choice for game designers at the moment. The future-shock cyberpunk arenas are starting to feel tired, the historical epics are starting to get too much and the far-off future space battles are being swamped by *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* cash-ins. It's about time we had some good old '80s nuclear paranoia back in our games, and Bohemia is perfectly placed to capitalise on the setting – having lived through the Iron Curtain ordeal first hand.

"It seems like such a long time ago that it's hard to believe it was real and not just a nightmare," confesses Marek. "As a child, I didn't care too much about anything, but since I was 15 I started thinking more about this. In communism, it wasn't just double

There's nothing quite like hitching a lift in one of these babies.

JEUX SANS FRONTIERS

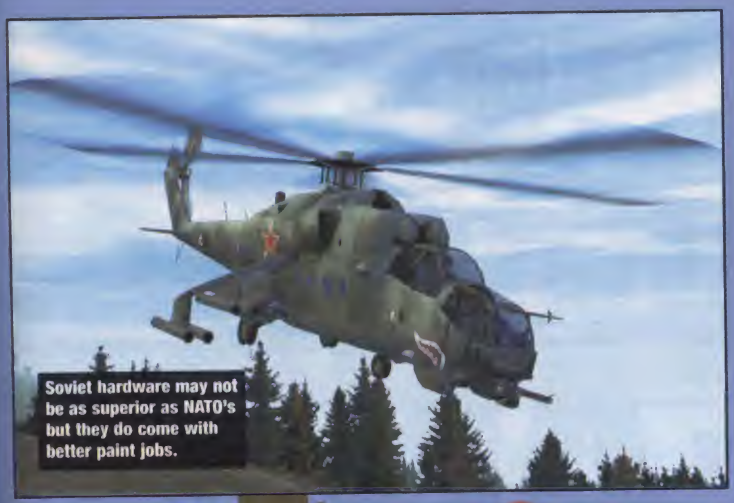
In the past couple of years it has not just been Britain, France and Germany producing top-name games

Spain, for instance, has begun to get in on the act with Rebel Act's *Severance* (reviewed on page 60) and *Commandos'* designers, Pyro Studios, taking everyone by storm. However, it has always been more difficult for teams away from the more central areas to make an impact on the global market. Things might be improving soon, though. "It's a great time of opportunities for European developers," says Marek when asked about the prospects for growth in the region. "There are no really big publishing forces in the region yet, but that might change with the recent merger of the biggest Czech distributor with one of the biggest Polish game companies. As well as that, there are also two other Czech teams working for big international publishers – one of them is Illusion Softworks, the creators of *Hidden & Dangerous*, and there's another team in Slovakia working on *Battle Isle IV* for Blue Byte." It's clear that there's an awful lot of talent waiting to be discovered in the paths less travelled, so let's hope that the big-name publishers start to take some interest.

The latest *Battle Isle* is also being developed in the region.

Hidden & Dangerous 2: an example of Czech talent.

Bet these guys don't have a blockade problem.



Soviet hardware may not be as superior as NATO's but they do come with better paint jobs.

IF YOU BUILD IT, THEY WILL FIGHT

***Operation Flashpoint*'s powerful mission editor lets you create some impressively complex scenarios**

As is rapidly becoming the norm in everything from hardcore flight sims to sodding platform games, *Flashpoint* comes complete with a powerful editing tool, letting you create everything from one-on-one shootouts to full-scale invasions. "The mission editor allows you to alter everything the game can do," says Marek. "We're not using anything else ourselves, so the game is really open on this side. The best thing is the editor is built directly into the game – you can create your first mission within just minutes. It's very simple."

Troops move and behave in extremely realistic ways, too.

speak but more like a kind of double 'think'. We were listening to the Voice of America on the radio and dreaming about freedom. People have short memories sometimes, but it was an evil empire and we lived on the evil side of the Iron Curtain."

The game takes place during the closing years of the Cold War. Gorbachev is taking power in Moscow and the new wave of *perestroika* isn't going down too well with some of the more hard-line generals. In order to show that the bear still has teeth, one general goes against orders and seizes control of an island community near the NATO border. The US army reacts and the conflict begins.

"The player starts on the training ground well before any conflict begins," says Marek. "After training, he is just one of the soldiers going into the conflict, following the orders of his commander. As the game proceeds, he'll be able to drive various vehicles and equipment and command his own squad. After quite a few missions he can be part of a tank crew or end up in a special operations squad performing sabotage behind enemy lines. After about two-thirds of the game he'll also be able to fly helicopters."

Operation Flashpoint has an awful lot going for it. The promised levels of total immersion are evident even in the early preview builds we've been fortunate enough to see. More than that, it needs to be applauded simply for the sheer levels of ambition it shows. The multi-role combat sim has often been the holy grail for simulation designers and the only time we thought we'd come close (DiD's *Wargasm*) proved to be a little disappointing when they took the arcade game route.

Flashpoint might well be the first game to break the barrier though and when we finally get to see it this spring, it might even prove to be engaging enough to divert us away from *Counter-Strike* – especially if they get the multiplayer game working. Fingers crossed. PZ

Character models are extremely detailed, although we're not sure about the glasses.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE COLD WAR

As part of our court-ordered community service, we take a break from our usual sexual innuendo, xenophobia and gratuitous violence to try and educate your young minds with a history lesson…

The Cold War officially began in March 1963 when a British secret agent was lured to Istanbul by a beautiful defector and ended up stealing a Russian code machine from under Soviet noses. The Russian Premier, Ernst Biofeld – famous for the odd birthmark on his head – took revenge by attempting to blow up an atomic bomb in Fort Knox. This became known as the Cuban Missile Crisis and was only prevented from succeeding thanks to US President JFK sleeping with Monica Monroe at the Watergate Hotel. In the meantime, German efficiency took a serious blow after blueprints for a proposed patio extension were misread and a large wall was instead built across the whole country. The Berlin Wall still stands today and is the only man-made object visible from space. To help ease tensions, new US President Ronald McDonald opened a restaurant in Russia and soon American values were flooding the country and communists everywhere were wearing blue jeans and dancing the jitterbug. The Cold War finally ended after Boris Yeltsin, a local Moscow drunken lunatic, climbed into a passing tank and shot at the government building, blowing up the evil Biofeld and saving the day.

Action stations, action stations...

MECHWARRIOR 4: VENGEANCE

Big in the US, but not here. Yet.

'This won't be *Falcon 4*'. Well that's a start.

There are 21 models of Mech, of which this is clearly just one.

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Microsoft
PUBLISHER Microsoft
WEBSITE www.microsoft.com/games
OUT February

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- 18-year *BattleTech* pedigree, including 50 books and enough merchandise to fill a tanker
- Mechs getting back to being big 'n' bad
- Less farting about, more mayhem, more intrigue
- Cause and effect finally hits *Mech* land

If they can mech it here, they can mech it anywhere, groans *Elvis Bacon*

Some things are huge in the US, but never so big over here. Hips, for a start. Sorry, cheap joke. Seriously though, there are many titles which hold a fascination for the US public that leave us absolutely stumped, from the mild does-not-compute of gridiron through to the what-planet-are-you-on tedium of deer hunting.

The *MechWarrior* series of robot war simulations falls somewhere in the middle of this Brit-bafflement scenario. Based on the 18-year-old *BattleTech* universe of board games, books, merchandise and other spin-offs, the series has, at times, approached almost religious status in the US. Yet with the exception of a brief flurry of excitement over the 1995 release (through Activision) of *MechWarrior II: 31st Century*, these 40ft stomping behemoths have singularly failed to capture our imagination. What interest there was plummeted with the workmanlike clones (think *Heavy Gear* and *EarthSiege*) which followed, and the extremes of pedantic detail to which the last outing, *Mech 3*, aspired.

So the only possible reason we're devoting two whole pages to *MechWarrior 4: Vengeance* is that it's showing dramatic signs of breaking this pattern. And the reasons for this are threefold.

First and foremost, from the US review code we've been looking at, it's living up to its stated intent of action-oriented gameplay as opposed to the ludicrously over-complicated *Mech 3*.

"We're going back to our roots and making action the focus, while keeping it relatively simple. This won't be *Falcon 4*," explains Jordan Weisman, one of the founders of FASA (*BattleTech*) and creative boss at Microsoft's game division.

"Our goal is not to make a *Mech*-type game; it's to make a great action game set in the *BattleTech* universe. For *Mech 4* we want to get more in touch with that – to have a sweaty-hand-on-joystick feel rather than that keyboard jockey feel."

The second major change to the way the game is being shaped concerns the player's role. The *BattleTech* universe has always been a Machiavellian mess of power struggles between noble houses. And yet, in your role as what amounted to a

More than 100 animations per Mech.

Story is bigger, and so is your role within it.

metal-assed squaddie in previous games, you had little sense of involvement in the higher picture.

Mech 4 will put you in a very central role, according to Weisman: "Story alone is fine, but this time we were determined that there'd be no more linear campaigns – the player needs power. It's about having things that basically we all want: importance, power and control.

"You are nobility – you're a 30ft knight in shining amour with the fate of a world hanging in the balance. We're giving you that key, central role, but we're also giving you a supporting cast of characters to interact with."

ROBOT WARS

The nuts and bolts of all this are that you'll be taking the role of Ian Dresari, prodigal son of the Duke of Kentares IV, returning to a homeworld in the throes of a civil war and then leading a rebellion against the occupying forces of House Steiner.

It'll be a dynamic universe with 21 different types of Mech (all of them pilotable by the player). Seven of these have never been seen before in *BattleTech*, and although you start out with a light Mech you'll soon be able to work your way up to more powerful machines. However, the developers are particularly keen to maintain the distinctions between Mech capabilities. So, yes, you can still head to the lab to customise your tin can, but you won't be able to fiddle around with the engine characteristics or bolt on inappropriate gear willy-nilly. You'll see why this is relevant in a moment.

The game's campaign will be based around 25 single-player missions in a node-based structure (three to five different missions per node, which you can do in any order), across seven terrain types including lunar, arctic, swamp, urban and desert. The single missions will be dynamic, in so far as you control a number of variables such as time of attack, loadouts, drop zones and extraction.

And this brings us to the third major change to the Mech way of thinking. In *Mech 4*, the campaign will rely on a persistent resource model throughout the entire game. You get a set amount of money, supplies, Mechs and so on at the beginning and that's your lot. If you lose a Mech in a given mission, it's gone for the duration. It's up to you to maintain enough of each – or scavenge equipment from the enemy – to get you through the campaign. With the neutered lab options mentioned earlier, you simply won't be able to re-fit a Mech to fill a totally new role.

Your lancemates (effectively, robotic wingmen) are also part of this persistent picture. Each is a character with variable personality, piloting ability and type of Mech. So when you choose who to take on a mission, you'll have to take into account the risk of losing their skill and experience permanently.

The *MechWarrior* game engines of old were well suited to their role, but hardly the stuff of eye-candy legend. However, the new graphics engine renders landscapes just as well as it draws loads of objects in detail (it was also designed from day one with multiplayer in mind, supporting up to 32 players in eight different game modes). As a result, you can expect a much busier place than the previous rather flat, sparse environments.

It's a toss-up as to which is the most impressive new feature but, forced to make a choice, the Christmas tree weapon effects narrowly lose out to the way each Mech has more than 100 animations, of which up to 30 can be blended simultaneously.

"Technological hops forward are less important to the success – or otherwise – of the latest *Mech* instalment than broader changes in the game goals"

The Mechs look better and feel more responsive, and that's what we all want out of life, no? But technological hops forward are far less important to the success – or otherwise – of the latest *Mech* installment than the broader changes in the game's goals. A return to intense action in stomping great big stupidly armed Mechanoids, an ego-inflating role in a world where people bow down to your might (as you've always secretly known they should), and some harsh decisions to make in a cause-and-effect campaign has potential, you have to admit. Even if that does put us in momentary agreement with the scary people from the land of lard and the family AK-47. PC

It contains 25 single-player missions, plus extensive multiplayer.

Your wingmen are more intelligent this time around.

MENTAL GEAR SOLID

JORDAN WEISMAN "Historically, *Mech* games have had lame AI. The classic *Mech 2* scenario, which also happened in *Mech 3* embarrassingly enough, was where you could stand outside the AI's activation range and pummel it to death. So what we wanted to do was avoid that mistake, but also to design an AI system where you've actually got some personality.

"What we've created is a system where both your allies and enemies have different emotional states and they move through them based on how you treat them. This means you get real diversity of play.

"The two guys who did the AI programming did a great, great job, and it gives you an actual feeling that there is some intelligence there. If you remember, a few years ago, everyone's buzz words were neural nets – which are wonderful things, but no one can afford to run them, it costs way too much processor power. But we think we've done reasonably well with *Mech 4*'s AI."

CV

Microsoft

MICROSOFT

***MechWarrior 4* is an in-house development, with involvement from Zipper Interactive (engine design) and the *BattleTech* people at FASA. And you still want a CV for Microsoft? Uh. OK, here are some highs and lows of Bill's gaming output so far…**

1982 Bill buys three lines supposed to represent a plane. Does rather well over next 20 years.

1996 Early games struggle. *MS Soccer* rightly described as 'special'.

1997 The bloke in glasses is twatted with custard pies by some Belgians, Chris Roberts' Digital Anvil studio signs up, and *Age Of Empires* launches. Makes a few bob, that one.

1998 Finally puts guns on *Flight Simulator*. No flies on this chap.

1999 *Pandora's Box*. Dodgy sexual metaphor and puzzle game from *Tetris* chap.

1999 Bored, decide to announce Xbox for a giggle.

2000 Poach *Halo* from Take 2.

2000 *Starlancer* and *Crimson Skies* take off. Polished flying antics.

2005 The bloke in glasses buys Europe as holiday home.

This town ain't big enough...

DESPERADOS: WANTED DEAD OR ALIVE

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Spellbound Entertainment Software
PUBLISHER Infogrames
EXPECTED RELEASE DATE April 2001
WEBSITE www.desperados-game.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- First Wild West strategy game
- Excellent weapon ideas
- Cunning enemy and civilian AI
- Great personalities and movie-like plot
- 3D line of sight

CV

SPELLBOUND

Founded in 1994, Spellbound is based near Offenburg in Southwest Germany. *Desperados* is its third PC release.

1994 *Perry Rhodan* – Operation Eastside Game version of Germany's most successful sci-fi series. We've never even heard of it – though we're sure it's great.

1997 *Airline Tycoon* – Well known airline management game. Has sold more 150,000 copies in seven different languages worldwide.

2001 *Desperados* – Should be Spellbound's most successful game to date.

***Keith Pullin* goes down Mexico way... via Germany?**

Dismissed by most as a simple *Commandos* clone, *Desperados* surprised everybody at a recent press showing in Germany by proving it has more to offer than just cowboys and Indians. Actually *Desperados* has only one Indian in the entire game, but that's because in 1880 Native Americans didn't venture as far south as New Mexico or Louisiana.

Duh. Didn't you know? We do. Well, we do now anyway; Offenburg based developer Spellbound Entertainment told us.

AYE CARAMBA!

At a glance, there's no disputing the fact that *Desperados* is *Commandos* with a Wild West sheen. But as Infogrames producer Ralph Adam explains, the differences are subtle, yet significant: "We have more than 30 different types of enemy, whereas in *Commandos* there were three. All of our enemies react differently too. There are the Mexicans who are pretty stupid, through to the Sheriffs who are very smart. If you watch any enemy for a while and study how they behave, you get a feeling of how intelligent they really are, and how they will react to you."

There's a truth to Herr Adam's statement that is hard to appreciate unless you physically sit down and play the game. We did, and on all of the game's 25 levels Mexicans are indeed portrayed as cowardly arse-scratching morons whose appetite for tequila and whores render them ineffective as guards and highly susceptible to imaginative forms of bribery. Whereas if you're attempting to infiltrate a Confederate Fortress, the discipline of the soldiers within means you have to work overtime hiding behind every rock, cactus and bush available to remain undetected.

"Mexicans are indeed portrayed as cowardly arse-scratching morons whose appetite for tequila and whores render them ineffective as guards"

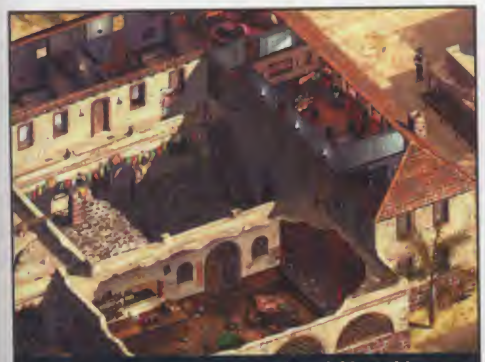
Sam doing what he does best.

In order to make the extraordinary AI work perfectly there are ten personality-defining attributes for every type of enemy and civilian. These include criteria such as resistance to alcohol, laziness, gambling, shot accuracy, courage, sense of duty, and the urge to have sex. Again, it's our sombrero-wearing friends who seem to take the brunt of Spellbound's playful stereotyping, but will real Mexicans see it as harmless fun?

Infogrames' senior product manager, Michael Bach doesn't believe its portrayal of Mexicans is unduly harsh: "We're just presenting

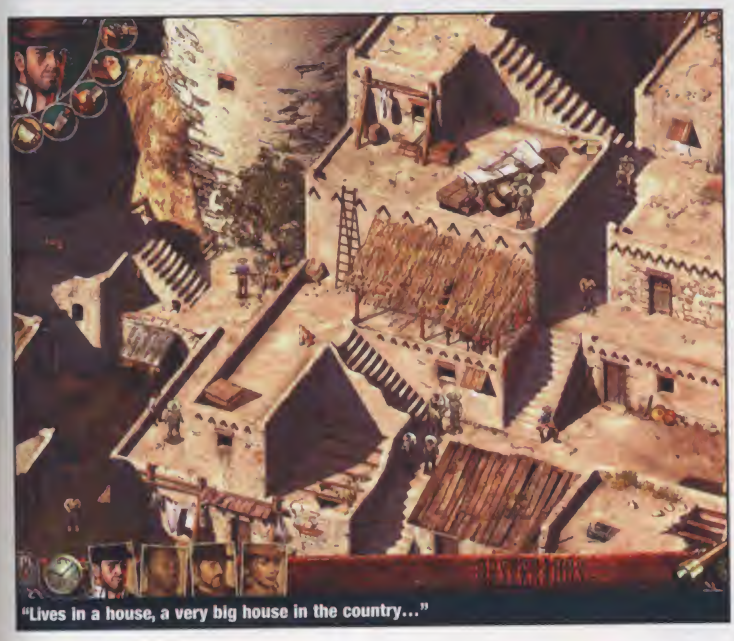
A green line of sight means this guy is oblivious to your presence. If it changes to yellow he thinks he's seen something. When it's red – you're dead.

As you can see, the level of detail is incredible.


You can even go inside buildings. You might want to come back here at night, though.

Bet you never thought you'd get to go on a boat ride down the Mississippi...

Team members can be found in the strangest places. Here you find Doc McCoy – Yoda lives just up the river...


"Lives in a house, a very big house in the country..."

Time to park your horse and get some whiskey refreshment.

the Wild West the way it was. There's actually a Mexican in the game who's very powerful. We also have Chinese, Negroes and women, so *Desperados* is a multicultural game." At this point Ralph Adam jokingly implies that the main bad guy is actually Kevin Keegan. And there's us thinking this was a strategy game...

SPAGHETTI OVERDOSE

In fairness, no one can accuse Spellbound of shirking its research or not taking the game seriously. As well as sifting through literature on American history circa 1880, everybody from the graphic artists to the CEO has been on a two year Western film bender to ensure the facts are straight. Whether having John Wayne or Clint Eastwood as a personal tutor actually qualifies you as an expert in these matters is questionable to say the least, but one thing a relentless diet of Spaghetti Westerns can do is instill a definite graphical style. And, as we're sure you'll agree, that aspect of *Desperados* is beautifully done.

The team's total and utter devotion to everything Wild West has also led to what should be a real edge-of-the-seat Western plot with saloon brawls, train robberies and *Maverick* inspired feisty female skulduggery.

The six main characters in this epic digital Western (John Cooper, Kate O'Hara, Samuel Williams, Doc McCoy, Paulo Sanchez and Mia Young) all have distinct personalities as well as each having five unique skills to help crowbar the team out of all manner of predicaments. In total that's 30 basic skills covering such innovations as kicking Mexicans in the bollocks (the favourite move of Infogrames' spanking PR person, Lynn "Daddy" Daniel), explosives experts, balloons filled with poison gas, blinding enemies with make-up mirrors and of course good ol' fashion guns and knives. There's no preset way of completing a level either, so it's left up to the player's instincts to decide by what means they will progress. Gas, guns, groin... The scope for experimentation is virtually limitless.

Time to impress a few old friends.

LINE 'EM UP

Desperados has another ace up its tricky poker playing sleeves: the line of sight routine is in full 3D. In other words, if you see a bandit on a balcony, you can sneak underneath without him even knowing you're there – unless you make too much noise, of course. Yes, there are basic stealth elements in place, and again you'll eventually have to learn which characters are best when it comes to sneaking around bandit territory and the like. And if you're ever unsure of the whereabouts of your enemies, there are three different levels of zoom to choose from, as well as an overview map depicting the location of every man, woman and child on the level.

All this and *Desperados* isn't due for release until April – and apparently, according to Infogrames Germany, there's another major surprise to come. Maybe it'll be the size of the Mexican's moustaches. Maybe it'll be a free Fajita with every copy sold. Or maybe, just maybe, it'll be released on time.

Q&A

ARMIN GESSERT

Spellbound's CEO (or Geschäftsfuhrer) talks about stuff that may, or may not interest you.

PCZ What was the last game you bought?
ARMIN *The Sims*
PCZ What's your favourite Western film?
ARMIN *The Man With No Name,* starring Terrance Hill.
PCZ Have you ever been in a fight before?
ARMIN I did karate for a long time so I'm a real streetfighter.
PCZ Er, OK, bye.

Three, that's the magic number...

THREE KINGDOMS – FATE OF THE DRAGON

***Richie Shoemaker* goes in search of some Far Eastern promise**

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Overmax Studios
PUBLISHER Eidos
WEBSITE www.eidosinteractive.co.uk
OUT February

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Like *Age Of Empires*. With knobs on
- Rich background story based on Chinese history
- RTS with elements of role-playing
- Will work on a Spectrum

It's Christmas time, there's no need to be afraid. At Christmas time, we let in light and banish shade. *Bah barrh, haowthumm. Bah baarh, haowthumm.* (Well, you try translating the sound of a didgeridoo.) Do they know it's Christmas time at all? *Waaah, wah waah wah... (Enough! – Ed.)*

Well, indeed it is Christmas time, and whether the starving masses of Africa know it or not, those of us that forage for a living in this godforsaken country certainly do. Driven into our brains from late September, with festive bunting displayed in shop windows earlier and earlier every year, you can hardly get through an autumn day without being reminded that the anniversary of baby Jesus' birth is just around the corner. At least this year we've had a bit of rain to take our minds off the horror that is almost upon us.

Beyond which lies the New Year, that extra-special time when lots of people top themselves for whatever reason, while the rest of us live through the next few months paying off the last few. Christmas – happy; New Year – sad.

Which is why the Chinese sensibly moved their New Year celebrations to February – to give themselves a couple of months to pay off their credit card bills before going hell for leather at the next party. After all, you'll notice they can afford to put on magnificent street parades, run around in dragon outfits, set off fireworks and bang all sorts of pots and pans, while we just get pissed and flock like lemmings to Trafalgar Square. Hey, do we know how to pardy, or what?

LET'S PARTY LIKE IT'S...

Unlike most other games around at this time of year, *Fate Of The Dragon* isn't being rushed out for a Christmas release, not that that would be a problem. Out now in its native China, the game that the rest of the world will be getting is effectively complete, save for the small matter of translating the local lingo into something we would recognise as English.

However, on the evidence of what we at *PC ZONE* were sent halfway across the world to see, they are almost there. With Persy Zhang, producer at Beijing-based Overmax Studios, looking over our shoulder, we had no problems getting to grips with the game.

Taken through the impressive opening sequence that sets the story for *Three Kingdoms*, we were immediately thrown into the first mission. At first glance – as you may have already noticed yourself – *Fate Of The Dragon* has more than a passing resemblance to another empire-building, real-time strategy game you may know, *Age Of Empires*.

Similar to Microsoft's saving grace, *Fate Of The Dragon* concerns itself at its most basic level with collecting resources (wood, iron, food – rice, and drink – wine), which can be cashed in for currency to help build up your city until you eventually take over the country.

However, unlike *Age Of Empires*' spread of world-renowned tribes, *Fate Of The Kingdoms* concerns itself with just three, each headed by a warlord – Cao Cao, Liu Bei and Sun Quan. They lend the game a diverse and authentic flavour, culled as they are from Chinese history and myth.

Added to those are more than 300 character generals who come into play later on and have a profound effect on gameplay. They edge the game towards familiar RPG territory to the point where, unlike in *AOE* where those you control are simply a cluster of animated sprites, here the main characters have a rich background and a repertoire of skills that you must make use of if you are to get through to the later stages.

THE PEASANTS ARE REVOLTING

Rather than drip-feed us a series of maps across which we must build and expand, Overmax has instead given us a head start. It's important to remember that while *Empires* is about technological advancement, *Kingdoms*' aims are less to do with building up an infrastructure and more about conquest in a purer sense.

The cities are already in place, and across any one map there may be any number of settlements. Far from

> **"Unlike *Age Of Empires*, where those you control are simply a cluster of animated sprites, here characters have a rich background and a repertoire of skills"**

CV

OVERMAX STUDIOS

1997 Overmax releases its first PC game *Metal Knights* in China and goes on to sell 500,000 copies.

2000 *Fate Of The Dragon* goes out to the China massif.

2001 Next stop? The world...

You can't decide where to build your cities, only what's inside the city walls.

making the levels colossal however, each city occupies what you might call a sub-level. Leave the safe haven of your city walls and you'll find your forces switch to the main map, across which you can raid and pillage until finding the enemy stronghold.

Different, too, is the dynamic way in which your population is handled. Rather than treat civilians separately from military units, in *Three Kingdoms* they are one and the same. If you need to expand your army, you have to take your peasants from the field and send them to soldier school. Once their job is done, they can effectively be demobbed and put back in the employ of the land. Similarly, your stables can't churn out cavalry units if there are no soldiers to ride the horses. And if all your villagers are out fighting, who will be left to till the fields and tread grapes to make wine for sacrifice?

It's small differences such as these that makes *Three Kingdoms* far more than a simple *Age Of Empires* tribute. While the economic side of the game is certainly more involving than *Age*'s, the military side lacks the finer tactical edge – a factor publisher Eidos is all too well aware of, and as we speak troop formations are being added into the game. And there's no time to be lost, for Eidos is aiming for a UK release before the Chinese New Year – which, as we are nearing the end of the Year of the Dragon, seems fair enough (*Fate Of The Pig* doesn't have quite the same ambience).

"I said women and children first!"

Troop formations are being added for the UK version.

Fight, build, trade, eat turtles.

Simple and intuitive interface.

"We are sailing. We are... come on, lads. Join in."

The mini-map on your left is your city; on the right is the local area outside and more cities.

LOW-SPEC HEAVEN

Do you have a PC that's about as advanced as a toaster? Then maybe *Three Kingdoms* is the game for you...

Well, look-kee here. It says on the *Three Kingdoms* information sheet that the game will run quite happily on a P166 with 32Mb RAM. Yes, you read that correctly: pee one-six-six, 32 megs of RAM – which, you may remember, most games had trouble working on two years ago.

Thankfully, the economic use of system resources shouldn't hit gamers who desire the very best graphics their 3D card can display. Of course, you won't see any gratuitous lens flare, nor will the landscape swoop around, but the buildings look as good as any seen in this type of game and the units that move around them have a distinctive charm all of their own.

sacrifice

"Animation is top notch throughout, and the fevered creature design have to be seen to be believed"
PC FORMAT
88%

HIT

"Shiny has once again harnessed ambition to create revolution"
DAILYRADAR.COM

"Masterful blend of RTS game elements with an adventure flavour"
GAMESPY.COM
93%

"You'd be pushed to find better graphics anywhere"
PC GAMEPLAY

"Be you a first-person fundamentalist or a RTS radical, Sacrifice will do it for you"
PC GAMER

"You'll be hard-pressed to find a more imaginative, intense and engaging game released this year"
GAMESDOMAIN.COM

Play the role of a wizard that battles against other wizards for supremacy. Sacrifice the souls of fallen warriors to your God. In return, he will grant you increasingly more power for you to cast spells to sacrifice more, until finally you become the ultimate power. This game rewards the quick-witted and deep thought, aggression, treachery and, of course, sacrifice.

- A quasi Real Time Strategy game that combines intense levels of battle action but minimises resource management - you can pick it up and play immediately
- Explore huge 3D landscapes generated in gloriously rich graphics with no fogging
- Hoards of characters with hundreds of individual animations and jaw dropping graphics
- Unique user friendly control system making 90% of the features accessible through the mouse and the cursor keys

Interplay

www.sacrifice.net

Shiny PC CD ROM

SACRIFICE © 2000 Shiny Entertainment. All Rights Reserved. Sacrifice is a trademark of Interplay Entertainment Corp. All Rights Reserved. Interplay and the Interplay logo are trademarks of Interplay Entertainment Corp. All Rights Reserved. Exclusively distributed by Virgin Interactive Entertainment (Europe) Ltd. Virgin is a registered trademark of Virgin Enterprises Ltd. All Rights Reserved. All other trademarks and copyrights are the property of their respective owners.

"Go on, drop an anthrax bomb. No one will know."

Maybe the UN could use the game for training.

There's more to war than fighting.

"And finally, the weather..."

You don't want to start setting up human shields.

"Now we go over live to Kate Adie..."

CONFLICT ZONE

Conflicting news report exclusive! Everybody else told 'peace on'. *James Lyon* told 'peace off'

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER MASA
PUBLISHER Ubisoft
WEBSITE www.animaths.com
OUT March

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- CPU adapts to your skills in real time
- Win war through the media
- Fully dynamic campaigns
- It has the word 'Zone' in it

Agreeable or not, the media have become an important tool in warfare. Whether slowly digging away for the truth or pumping out baseless propaganda, it's all too apparent that the only opinions the public ever receive about a war are the ones that the reporters feed to us. The question of whether our approval or condemnation of the facts has any effect on the outcome of the war has become more significant, as commanders are forced to make moralistic choices that see them getting favourable coverage on the six o'clock news.

Funny? I thought war was just about firing searing hot pieces of lead into the chests of young men until their innards schlep down their legs and stain their over-polished boots.

Whatever the case, media intrusion is set to be one of the unique features of the new RTS from MASA, where the object is to defeat your opponents not just through warfare, but also by discrediting them in the eyes of the public. It sounds like an interesting idea in a genre waking up to the fact that people are getting sick of continually collecting resources. Whether this just boils down to avoiding shooting civilians when the cameras are running, or if the player can concoct elaborate cover-ups and glorified war stories is yet to be seen. The possibility of forcing the other side to bomb an innocent village to discredit their name could be the kind of immoral tactic we might expect if MASA does pull it off.

However, that's not the only selling point of the game: the developer seems very excited about its newly created intelligence system, DirectIA (Intelligent Adaptation). This is apparently markedly different from normal AI, letting the game evolve and adapt to your playing needs. As you play a mission, different commanders under your control will learn how you play and adopt your style for you. Which hopefully means you can leave them to get on with things and not have to go back and check on them every six seconds.

> **"You must defeat your opponents not just through warfare, but also by discrediting them in the media"**

In fact, MASA even goes so far as to claim the game can operate autonomously online with your own personality without you ever having to take part. Which gives a whole new meaning to the phrase 'playing the game in your sleep'.

Each commander also has a level of charisma, which allows them to gain better or worse control over their troops depending on how they feel. But it's not just them: all units will have their own personality, being able to perceive danger and make a tactical decision to run from it, instead of standing around gawping like a tourist, or grouping together with similar units in offensive or defensive measures.

MASA even goes as far to say that some units are partial to looking out for number one and are willing to fire at their own allies in order to save themselves. If that doesn't put the icing on the cake, I don't know what does. Of course, the enemy will be able to do exactly the same as you, learning your tactics, anticipating them, then counteracting in a way that seems fit.

It's worth noting that MASA is already incorporating the technology into proper army simulators. So at least we know it has some faith in its designs – unless we start seeing news footage of soldiers walking two miles in the wrong direction in order to get round a tree.

Here's hoping it can marry this successfully to the media concept. Hell, killing people always makes good news. PZ

the difference between victory and defeat could be the width of this page

With over 800 km of racetrack, dazzling special effects that include photo-realistic shadowing, real-time lighting effects and 6000 polygon enhanced graphic environments, a split-second won or lost could make all the difference. That's why for the very first time, you'll have an intelligent co-driver to guide you.

PRO RALLY 2001

victory is in the detail

PC CD-ROM

© 2000 Ubi Soft Entertainment. All rights reserved.

Ubi Soft

A house plus a house equals... a village!

The *Elder Scrolls* version of Soho.

"What are you looking at."

Where would we be without RPG guards.

The engine has been given a major overhaul.

ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Bethesda Softworks
PUBLISHER Virgin
OUT Winter 2001
WEBSITE www.elderscrolls.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Focused storyline
- Good-looking engine
- Culture barometer points to RPG at the moment

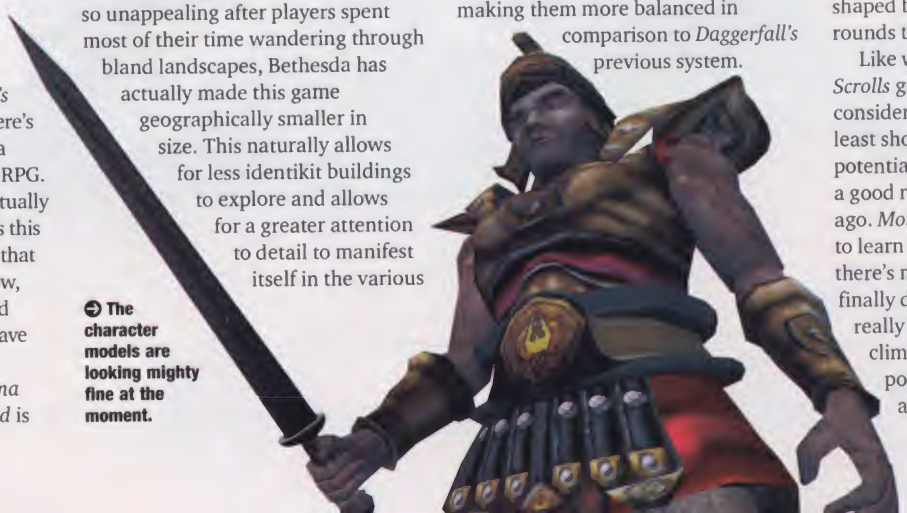
***James Lyon* pulls on his stockings, buckles his tunic and dons his cloak. Nothing to do with the preview, he's just going out later**

Despite the resurgence of popularity in sword and sorcery RPGs , it's easy to forget that the *Elder Scrolls* series has been persistently gnawing away on the trouserleg of gaming even in the midst of the goblin genre's darkest hours. And now, after *Arena* and *Daggerfall*, plus the two spin-offs *Battlespire* and *Redguard*, Bethesda is currently working on a direct sequel. Now being as good a time as any, with the rival *Ultima* series dying an ignominious death – in single-player format at least, and *Baldur's Gate II* garnering rave reviews, there's definitely a gap in the market for a single-player, first-person fantasy RPG. Especially since the developers actually seem to have listened to the critics this time. Fans of the series will know that *Daggerfall* was criticised for its slow, rambling play and ugly bitmapped graphics. Both aspects of which have been happily addressed here.

Even with the success of *Ultima Online* and *EverQuest*, *Morrowind* is being designed as a solo experience, omitting the multiplayer aspects and focusing instead on the single-player to enhance the narrative and story of the game. What we do know is that it's once again set in the world of Tamriel, your adventures seeing you dispatched to the volcanic island of Vvardenfell, a place currently involved in dark political shenanigans of the highest degree, as five diverse factions fight to gain control. Other plot details are thin on the ground at the moment, but it doesn't take a genius to work out you're probably going to have to save the world from some hideous evil that threatens your existence.

However, far from the sprawling nature of *Daggerfall*, which made it so unappealing after players spent most of their time wandering through bland landscapes, Bethesda has actually made this game geographically smaller in size. This naturally allows for less identikit buildings to explore and allows for a greater attention to detail to manifest itself in the various characters. Suffice to say, it'll lend more gravitas to the plot and ensure you don't get too bored as they fight towards the end. That's not to say it isn't a big game: there are more than 1,000 NPCs to converse with, at least.

Players will be able to join a guild as they progress, their choice affecting the storyline and the attitude of different characters towards them. Naturally, this is going to lead to numerous conflicts, which is fine since the combat system has been given a bit of a touch up too – weapons are likely to handle more in the style of the *Thief* series, or indeed *Ultima Underworld* as you move in the direction you want to swing in order to hit your enemy. Spells are also going through a redesign, making them more balanced in comparison to *Daggerfall's* previous system.


The character models are looking mighty fine at the moment.

It's not just the game mechanics that have been redesigned, though. Bethesda's new engine dispenses with the bitmaps of old and, following on from spin-off *Redguard*, it's definitely 3D acceleration a-go-go.

"The engine dispenses with the bitmaps of old and it's definitely 3D acceleration a-go-go"

It looks as if it could really do the business and what's more it's versatile enough to allow a construction kit to be slapped in the box allowing fans to create their own landscapes and quests to exchange over the Internet. Expect plenty of rudely-shaped buildings to be doing the rounds then.

Like we've said, while the *Elder Scrolls* games have never been considered classics they have at least shown an above average potential, with *Redguard* meriting a good recommendation two years ago. *Morrowind* has every chance to learn from past mistakes, and there's no reason the series can't finally deliver something to be really proud of in this current climate. We're already furiously polishing our halberds in anticipation.

© 2000 LucasArts Entertainment Company LLC. The LucasArts logo is a registered trademark of LucasFilm Ltd. Escape from Monkey Island and its characters are registered trademarks or trademarks of LucasArts Entertainment Company LLC. All rights reserved.

FINALLY, A SOFTWARE PIRATE YOU CAN TRUST

ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND™

LUCASARTS ENTERTAINMENT COMPANY PRESENTS
AN OFF-BEAT ADVENTURE OF PIRATEY PROPORTIONS
STARRING GUYBRUSH THREEPWOOD ELAINE MARLEY-THREEPWOOD CHARLES L. CHARLES
OZZIE MANDRILL THE ULTIMATE INSULT AND LOTS O' MONKEYS

FOR WINDOWS 95/98 - 3D HARDWARE REQUIRED

monkey4.lucasarts.com

LUCAS Arts

PC ZONE REVIEWS

Don't spend a single penny until you've checked out the *ZONE* reviews first – we'll tell you which games you've got to buy and which games to avoid

THE PC ZONE GAMES SYSTEM

This is the machine we use to review new titles on. Our reviewers also use older machines to get an impression of gaming in the 'real' world, but this is what we currently consider the best value-for-money set up. As games become more demanding, the specs will change to reflect that

At the heart of the machine is a 600MHz AMD Athlon processor. These babies are seriously scorching, optimised for 3D applications, so first-person shooters fly like you wouldn't believe. Faster Athlons are now available, but at the current prices, this is probably the best value for money. The system bus runs at a godlike speed, so the whole thing is like a supercar with no brake pedal.

Supporting the processor is a MaxiGamer Xentor 32 from Guillemot, purveyors of all things graphicy. Based on the TNT2 chipset, these RAM-packed beasties are designed to cope with the polygons, textures and special effects that those game developers insist on chucking at the screen. Guillemot has a new GeForce 256-based card in the offing, which we're hoping to upgrade to soon.

Pionex has supplied the cases and 128Mb of PC100 memory for the motherboard. For gaming, especially with RAM prices as they are now, 128Mb is the optimum amount. The cases have room for expansion without taking up too much space.

Hard drive services are provided by the stunning 7,200rpm, 20Gb Maxtor DiamondMax Plus (from the 5120 family of drives). It's large and fast with room for full installs and quick to load games when you want to play them.

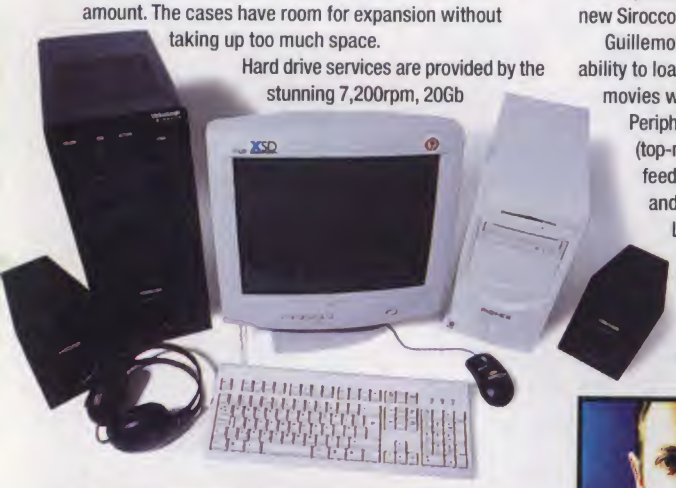
Sound services are supplied by VideoLogic. The SonicVortex 2 card is a PCI device featuring Aureal A3D 2.0, ideal for gamers. The latest drivers are stunning, using the card's own chip to reduce the processing overhead on the CPU when calculating 3D audio. Aureal's API now handles not only sounds themselves, but also their reflections: as you approach a doorway, you can hear sounds from the room reflected into the corridor. Immersive stuff.

VideoLogic also supplies speakers from the superb Sirocco range. We primarily use Crossfires for gaming – they may seem expensive, but you get twice the quality you pay for. Four satellite speakers and a humungous subwoofer give pinpoint accuracy for 3D audio and bass meaty enough for the rumbliest explosions. We also use other speakers from the range (the original Sirocco and new Sirocco Pro) for sound-card testing.

Guillemot's DVD Theater set-up provides not only the ability to load games quickly, but also to watch DVD movies with its bundled MPEG decoder card.

Peripherals are supplied by Microsoft, from USB mice (top-notch for first-person shooters) to the full force-feedback monty – joysticks and driving wheels – and the ubiquitous SideWinder gamepads.

Last but not least, are headphones from Philips and fabulous 17in Brilliance monitors (107Bs). If you're used to cheap monitors typically bundled with new PCs, the crispness and stability of the image on these comes as quite a shock.



REVIEWS YOU CAN TRUST

ALL THE LATEST GAMES REVIEWED & RATED

We at *ZONE* pride ourselves on telling you exactly what we think. Our reviewers are the most experienced and talented in the business. They're all experts in their chosen genre, and won't pull any punches – if a game's not worth buying, we'll tell you why. But we don't leave it there. We want to know what you think of the games that come out, which is why we have our Feedback section on page 101. This is where you get the opportunity to put your point of view into *PC ZONE*.

CHECK THE SPECS!

The standard spec machine these days is a P233 with 32Mb of memory – but before a game you need to make sure it will work on your system. Because the tech specs on packaging can be a little optimistic, make sure you check out the We Say bit in our tech specs box. This is where we report on what we think the minimum tech specs should be. If a game runs like a tortoise on the machine listed by the publishers, we'll tell you. All the games reviewed are tested on the minimum-spec PC as quoted on the packaging.

WHERE TO CALL

Having trouble finding any of the games listed in the reviews section of the magazine? Here are the numbers you need to call:

Acclaim 020 7344 5000 • **Activision** 01895 456700 • **Anco** 01322 292513 • **Blue Byte** (Germany) 49 0 208 450880 • **Codemasters** 01926 814132 • **Cryo** 01926 315552 • **Eidos Interactive** 020 8636 3000 • **Electronic Arts** 01932 450000 • **Empire Interactive** 020 8343 7337 • **Europress** 01625 855000 • **Gremlin Interactive** 0114 263 9900 • **GT Interactive** 020 8222 9700 • **Hasbro Interactive** 020 8569 1234 • **Infogrames** 0161 827 8000 • **Interplay** 020 7551 4222 • **Microids** (France) 00 33 146 01 54 01 • **Microsoft** 0345 002 000 • **Mattel** 01444 246333 • **NovaLogic** 020 7405 1777 • **Rage Software** 0151 237 2200 • **Take 2 Interactive** 01753 854 444 • **THQ** 01483 767656 • **Ubi Soft** 020 8944 9000 **Zablac** 01626 332233

MEET THE TEAM

All *PC ZONE*'s reviewers are experts in their field. We like to give every game that comes in for review the best chance, which is why we give it to a fan of the genre

CHRIS ANDERSON
GENRE RPG, adventure, strategy
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Escape From Monkey Island*

DAVE WOODS
GENRE FPS, RPG, arcade
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Counter-Strike* and *Severance: Blade Of Darkness*

RICHIE SHOEMAKER
GENRE RTS, space combat
CURRENTLY PLAYING Nothing, my PC is shagged

MARK HILL
GENRE Adventure, RPG, turn-based
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Escape From Monkey Island* and *Hitman*

Another year over, and what have you done? 2001: What's the next big thing?

My back in.
Stannah Stairlifts.

Scored five goals, lost £500 in stupid bets.
The Sky Blues in Europe.

Got married.
A Divorce.

Nothing, I'm a professional slacker.
Couches.

PROBABLY SNOBBERY

OH LORDY IT'S Richie Shoemaker

Once in a while a game comes along that initially, after seeing screenshots and having PR drivel spat in your ear, you don't like the look of for whatever reason. Then, without much in the way of persuasion the game arrives through the post and the team here decides who should review it.

In the case of *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2*, it was not us who called Mallo, but Mallo who called us, demanding that he be the one to scrape his virtual knees across its devilish circuits. Fair enough we thought, it's yours.

Then two weeks later he sent through his review. 88 per cent?! We can't have that, not for a console game. What will our readers think? Ten minutes of hoo-hah, a tin a beluga caviar and a box of Ferrero Rocher later we calmed down and installed the game. Well, call us toffee-nosed and blue-veined if we didn't actually fall in love with it right there and then.

Similarly, we were rather wary of this month's cover game *Severance*. An action adventure it may be, but it's principles are grounded firmly in beat 'em up territory, with combo moves to learn and heads to cut off from bleeding bodies – very console-y. Unlike *Tony Hawk's* however, *Severance* is a game we have been keeping an eye on since it was first shown to us back in 1997, when it was known simply as *Blade* and due to be published by Gremlin (RIP) by Christmas 1998. Even way back then it was a stunning graphical achievement and it still is three years on. Even better for us, *Severance* is unlikely to arrive on any of the current consoles anytime soon, they just couldn't handle it.

Anyway, turn the page and find out for yourself what we think. Even better, play the exclusive demo on this month's cover CD.

WHAT DO OUR SCORES MEAN?

90-100% Here at *ZONE* we score every game out of 100. If a game receives the impressive score of 90 or above, it is awarded the *PC ZONE* Classic award. These games are original, innovative, compelling and are worth buying even if you're not really a fan of the genre.

80-89% Games that score 80-89 get the *PC ZONE* Award For Excellence. These are excellent examples of their type of game – and if you're a fan of the genre, you should definitely consider buying the title.

70-79% Any games scoring between 70-79 have just missed an Award For Excellence, but don't ignore them. The score is well above average and that means you're getting a great title that's worth the investment if you're a fan of the genre.

50-69% Games that score in this region don't win any awards, but they're above average and well worth a look. If you're not a fan of the genre, though, they will probably offer limited long-term appeal.

20-49% These games are below average and you should really only consider parting with your cash if you're a big fan of the series or genre, or if you happen to see them at a hugely reduced price.

0-19% Games that score less than 20 should be avoided. They offer little in the way of long-term appeal, can be frustrating and definitely aren't much fun. If a game is seriously bugged, then it will also fall into this category. You have been warned.

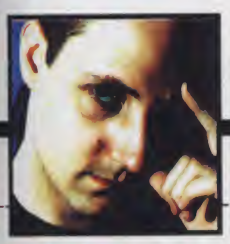
REVIEWS CONTENTS

Hmmm, he's definitely seen better days.

60 SEVERANCE: BLADE OF DARKNESS
66 AMERICAN MCGEE'S ALICE
70 ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND
74 COLIN MCRAE RALLY 2.0
77 SIMON THE SORCERER 3D
78 HITMAN: CODENAME 47
80 TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2
83 TOMB RAIDER CHRONICLES
84 LINKS 2001
86 CALL TO POWER II
88 STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE – THE FALLEN
90 NO ONE LIVES FOREVER
91 BLAIR WITCH VOLUME 2: THE LEGEND OF COFFIN ROCK
92 SCREAMER 4X4
94 MOHO
94 CHAMPIONSHIP RUGBY MANAGER
94 SUPERCROSS KINGS
95 FUR FIGHTERS
95 MTV SKATEBOARDING
95 DIRT TRACK RACING & DTR: SPRINT CARS
96 MOTOCROSS MANIA
96 THANDOR: THE INVASION
96 KAWASAKI ATV POWERSPORTS
97 JETFIGHTER IV: FORTRESS AMERICA
97 CITY TRADER
97 HOGS OF WAR

IT'S A TOUGH CALL...

Under the *ZONE* scoring system, new games will have to be pretty spectacular to receive this award. They will have to take their genre to unprecedented new heights, and represent a major step forward for PC gaming. There are now very few titles that can justifiably be described as *PC ZONE* Classics. This trend will continue across all genres. Generally speaking, all *ZONE* Classics are must-have titles (the benchmark title being the definitive game of the genre), but that does not mean you should discount games that score 80+ per cent. These games receive the *PC ZONE* Award For Excellence and are essential buys if you are a fan of the genre the game fits into. Classics, on the other hand, are games we think will appeal to everyone and bring new fans to that particular genre. There will not be many of them. When we say a game is a *classic*, we really mean it!



MARTIN KORDA
GENRE Strategy, space combat
CURRENTLY PLAYING *SoccerSim* and *Counter-Strike*
Taken a team of no hopers to the verge of greatness in *SoccerSim*. My team of no hopers.

STEVE HILL
GENRE Football, racing
CURRENTLY PLAYING Nothing, just sleeping.
Numbers in the bank. Just sleep.

PAUL PRESLEY
GENRE FPS, action/adventure
CURRENTLY PLAYING *SoccerSim* and *Hitman*
I can't even remember what I did last week, let alone last year. Nothing much.

KEITH PULLIN
GENRE Adventure/RTS
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Champ Manager 00/01*
Retired to the sunny south coast. Wave power.

JAMES LYON
GENRE Action/adventure
CURRENTLY PLAYING *C&C: Red Alert 2*
Gone back to school. The GameBoy Advance.

PAUL MALLINSON
GENRE Action, RPG, turn-based
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Tony Hawk's 2*
Become a born-again virgin. House Of The Dead Touch-Typing Tutor – Sega is a amazing!

SEVERANCE: BLADE OF DARKNESS

£34.99 • Codemasters • Out January

One of the bloodiest battles ever witnessed on a PC screen.

Lara Croft this Knight most certainly is not...

Zoe's done her head and back in. Things can only get worse.

Bright eyes. Burning like fire.

Looks like somebody is about to lose their head. The red trail on the sword means a seriously special combo move has been called into action.

An Amazon walks down a shadowy walkway, yesterday.

Dem bones, dem bones...

Known for losing his head at inappropriate moments, *Keith Pullin* was the perfect choice to review another mindless shocker

Usually, when you're commissioned to write a six-page review, the first thing that enters your mind is 'how the hell can I write 3,600 words about this?'

It doesn't matter how good or bad a game is. The simple fact is that, in most cases, if we're honest, we all know that 90 per cent of the titles knocking around your average games emporium fit into a specific category with common gameplay routines.

So, it's not often that you find a seemingly straightforward game that's so crammed full of features you feel totally vindicated in giving it the unadulterated full works. Spanish developer Rebel Act's debut offering of *Severance* is one of those very rare and joyous occasions.

PCZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

FANTASY FRENZY

At first glance you wouldn't think *Severance* was any different from numerous other third-person hack 'n' slash fantasy funfests. In fact, initial reaction is one of slight disappointment; the basic walking, running and jumping animation is really quite stiff and there are no lithe acrobatics to speak of at all. Lara must be wondering what all the fuss is about...

Adapting to the controls is also a bit of a problem. For some reason, *Severance* contains about twice as many keys as your usual action game and there's no gamepad option, either. The helpful tutorial does its best to clear things up, but with a keyboard overlay included in the package, it's clear that Codemasters is aware that the control system could be simpler. In short, this is a game that takes some time and patience to get into, but when you do... well, there's no turning back.

Delving deep into the game, you eventually hit upon an infectious addiction that's not only surprising, but also admirable. *Severance* encourages you to launch into your foes with the unbridled frenzy of a velociraptor on PCP.

Oh yes, we're talking the kind of abhorrent violence that makes you cringe and duck in your chair to avoid being splattered. We're talking severed heads flying through the starlit sky. We're talking fountains of blood spewing forth after deliberate and intentionally aimed thrusts. We're talking big, red, 18-certificate and inevitable tabloid-led repercussions on

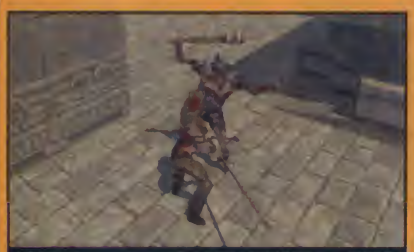
"At first you wouldn't think *Severence* is any different from other hack 'n'slash funfests. Lara must wonder what the fuss is about"

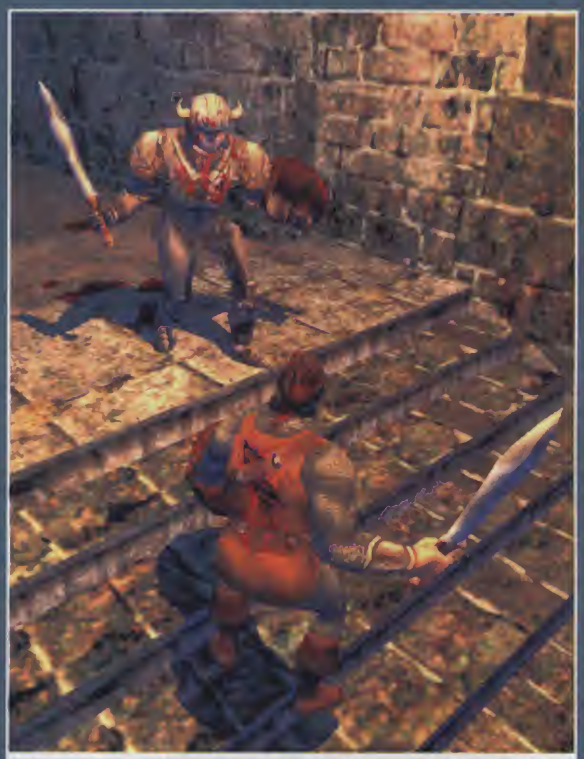
Still, size isn't everything.

First-person view.

LOCKING ON

One of the great things about the fighting in *Severance* is the way you can lock onto your opponents. It's a similar style to that used in *Legend of Zelda*, and basically means that you always face your opponent. Ultimately, it's a simple, yet effective, method of allowing the player to concentrate on the battle in hand instead of wasting time fiddling with the controls to get into the right position. Another advantage of locking on is that, as well as knowing your target's health and power rating, you can see if they're carrying any useful items.


Like, you've switched off your targetting computer?


Both the model and background textures are among the best we've seen.

Is there a doctor in the house?

As you can see, some of the levels are quite large.

the moral-eroding qualities of modern videogames.

There's no doubt that the shock tactics will aid *Severance*'s reputation and profile – it's a proven strategy that's worked on many an ad campaign in the past. What's refreshing here is that underneath all the gory hype lies an exceptional game. *Severance* actually possesses innovations. Gasp. Yes, as we said in last month's preview, the five-year development time has been well spent.

NO EMOTION

On most games of this type you eventually hit a psychological brick wall where you suddenly realise that you've been robotically dismembering people for the past three days and have forgotten why. *Severance* manages to push that particular barrier so far back you wonder whether it's there at all.

As soon as the slicing and dicing reaches that vaguely numbing stage where you've become cold, emotionless and detached from reality, your character advances a level and learns a brand-new 'combo'. All of a sudden, a basic action/adventure is transformed into *Streetfighter 2* or *Dead Or Alive 2*, or any number of arcade/console beat 'em-ups you care to remember. However, the difference with this is that you're not in the limited confines of a small 2D arena. Here there's a whole 3D world to explore – and annihilate.

"We're talking 18-certificate and inevitable tabloid led repercussions on the moral eroding qualities of modern videogames"

There are around 250 different moves, including exotically named creations such as Rage of the Goddess, Northern Lights and Snake's Breath. Each of the four characters has a favourite, but it's left up to the player to find out who's better suited to what. There are even certain stages that can only be reached if you're using a specific character. A direct result of all this is that you can complete the game with four different characters and experience new surprises each time you play. It's a nice touch, and one that should improve longevity.

Some may even perceive this form of experimentation as verging on RPG territory. There are others who wouldn't even consider comparing it to the likes of *Deus Ex*, *Diablo II* or *System Shock 2*. And sure enough, this feisty wannabe has nowhere near the complexity of any of those. Yet there are other elements that add weight to its RPG aspirations.

All characters begin the game with zero defence and power ratings. Each time you advance a level these attributes will increase. They will also change depending on the type of armour, shield or weapon that you use. There are also a few potions lying around which can be guzzled to temporarily increase your skill.

'sword of cheese...'

The morning after the curry the night before.

Don't lose your head. Too late.

Shadows and lighting have never looked this good.

You know what they say about men with big swords...

The arsenal at your disposal is absolutely mind-blowing. There are approximately 100 objects of destruction to choose from, ranging from fire-belching blades to traditional bow and arrows. Some of the more bizarre items you may or may not be tempted to use in anger include spades, severed limbs, rocks and chairs – you name it, you can use it. Playing *Severance* is like finding yourself in a pub fight where anything not nailed down is used as a lethal weapon.

FLAMING HELL

Fire also comes in very handy. Not only can you pick up unlit torches and light them to find your way around dark areas, you can actually set fire to stuff. Near the start of the game there's a room with an exit blocked by boxes. The solution is to simply burn the boxes to get through. It's common sense really, but with so many adventures of this kind, all too often it's common sense that's missing.

Severance doesn't take it too far though, and if you're looking for a completely cerebral experience, you're in the wrong place. Puzzles are not a strong point here. Sure, there are various points in the game where there's a break from the wanton mutilation and you get a chance to push a few blocks and pull a few levers. Spinning blades, swinging balls of fire and other standard obstacles also make an appearance, but that sadly is about the size of it. The only possible way you can get stuck or confused is if you get lost in some of the bigger, more complicated maps.

We could say that *Severance*'s level design is not the best in the world, but that would be a bit unfair because the maps are actually very interesting and imaginative. The truth is that the levels are so big, players are bound to get disorientated. Maybe there's been a slight breakdown in communications between the Spanish developers and Codemasters on this one but, in our experience, it's usually better to break the stages down to smaller, more digestible, bite-size chunks. Still, that is not the case, so you're just going to have to work on your sense of direction and keep your wits about you.

DIRTY ROTTEN SNEAK

The eerie atmosphere of *Severance* is spot on. The dark, brooding music rouses itself into a crescendo of crashing cymbals and booming bass drums during battle scenes, and is undoubtedly the perfect ambient accompaniment to the grizzly medley of grunts and screams. Other sonic wonders include the slow crackling of burning torches and the gushing of waterfalls. And like in *Thief: The Dark Project* you can also hear the conversations of guards as you creep up on them. While this is not necessarily a revolutionary idea, it fits in well with the general tension *Severance* has to offer.

Stealth is something you can either ignore or play along with. If your character preference lies with the Knight or Barbarian, it's

WHAT A MOVER

How to master combos

When you learn a new combo, accessing this screen shows you how to pull it off. The moves are reminiscent of arcade fighting games and are easy to perform and highly effective. The menu screen also contains a log of the plot and tells you what secrets you've found.

To finish things off there's another screen that allows you to view the effect of general items such as potions and various other consumables. Very handy indeed.

Mastering most of the combos available shouldn't prove too difficult.

Examine this page to see what you're about to eat or drink.

OBJECT THERAPY

Smashing stuff

The incredible range of objects available makes experimentation a large part of the game. Admittedly, the large majority of these items are about as useful as a chocolate teapot, but nonetheless, throwing everyday objects around for sheer pleasure is surprisingly therapeutic. Don't forget to smash up as much stuff as you can – you'll often find food inside boxes, crates and barrels.

A Hogshead pub somewhere in the north of England.

Smash everything you see to find some tasty surprises.

He's behind you! Enemies are quite prepared to work as a team in order to overwhelm you.

Severance contains the odd jump here and there.

Don't let his size fool you – this dude packs a punch.

unlikely that such a subtle approach will be to your liking. If that is the case then, no problem – you can crash through the stages making as much noise as you like, waving your sword about and throwing your hands in the air like you just don't care.

However, playing as the Dwarf or Amazon casts a different light on the situation. The Amazon in particular is not so well equipped to deal with toe-to-toe scuffles and tends to be more effective when lurking in the shadows, picking off enemies with a well-placed arrow to the throat.

It's easy to gawp in admiration at the effectiveness of the lighting and shadows, but it's the physics engine that really steals the show. When barrels are smashed, small shards spin across the floor. Blood drips down walls and staircases in the most lifelike way, and other objects – or, indeed, limbs – roll down slopes until they come to a rest at the bottom. Convincing it most certainly is, yet sometimes, totally against your conscious will, it's all too easy to lose concentration mid-battle and admire the physical perfection of the destruction around you.

THERE CAN BE ONLY ONE

It's advisable not to lose concentration too often though. All 30 species of enemy you come across during the course of the game's 17 enormous stages prove to be adept fighters. They don't just stand there and let you carve them up like a Christmas turkey. Hell no. Those that have shields use them with the uncanny intelligence of a human opponent, and those that don't make full use of their ducking and dodging abilities. Some of the more organised denizens attack in groups with some of them even having the sense to use a decoy fighter while others circle around behind.

Frankly, it's not on. We've never had to deal with this sort of intelligence before. *Rune* went some way towards it, but *Severance* really does complete the picture. Some of the battles are truly epic, and as you slowly force a particularly skilful warrior slowly backwards, the words "there can be only one…" keep creeping into your mind.

Despite the ultra-realistic feeling of the fighting there are

IN PERSPECTIVE

Severance really is a cut above the rest. When it comes to intelligent and realistic fight sequences there really is no better game available. *Rune* is still great fun but, if you're itching to buy a long-lasting challenge, get *Severance* now.

Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation

Deathtrap Dungeon

Indiana Jones And The Infernal Machine

Rune

Severance: Blade Of Darkness

The attention to detail is quite astonishing.

Standing amidst fleshy carnage is strangely satisfying.

some extremely irritating facets that cannot be ignored. For a start, just as you can lop off a poorly defended head, so the same can happen to you – even with full energy. There's no doubt this is the kind of the thing that's likely to happen in real life should you somehow get involved in a swordfight, but to have your game suddenly cut short thanks to one unguarded moment is a little harsh.

whole game rating is based upon the number of times you save. Save just once in the entire game and you are rated as 'awesome', while if you save more than 20 times, you are rated as 'poor'. The idea is to not penalise anyone for saving, but to offer an incentive to save less.

ALL BY MYSELF

The multiplayer game is one area that is fairly dull. The basic idea is to hook up with another player over the Internet or a LAN and then fight in a one-on-one battle to the death. There's a 'winner stays on' option as well, meaning that players can queue up to take you on. The more fights you win the more moves you learn.

And that's it really. A small online adventure might have been a nice touch, but this is, in essence, a single-player game, so we should be thankful for any kind of online option at all. Still, it means that there's plenty of scope for improvement and, if *Severance* does manage to sell a few copies, there's a good chance more online delights will feature heavily in the sequel.

Other improvements could focus on the animation and interface, but apart from that, you have to say that *Severance* is an amazingly accomplished work of art. But is it a classic? Not quite. OK, the graphics and physics are immaculate, and the fighting is elegant. But ultimately *Severance* doesn't quite make it to the top of the tree.

Of course, it's all needless violence really – but when is violence needed? *Severance* will no doubt upset its fair share of poodle-pampering right wing moaners, but who cares? Escapism is a personal preference. For some it means galloping around the countryside tearing foxes to pieces. Others prefer to while away the hours pretending to manage their favourite football team. In this case it's chopping off heads in a make-believe land of heroes and villains.

Which of these forms of escapism is more damaging to the moral fabric of our fragile society then? You choose. PCZ

"In short, *Severence* is not for beginners – and, to be honest, it's bloody difficult to get anywhere without saving regularly"

Yet this uncompromising feature is completely in character with the rest of the game. In short, *Severance* is not for beginners – and to be honest it's bloody difficult to get anywhere without saving regularly. That said, the save option is extremely well thought out. There's no difficulty setting as such, yet the

CALL THAT A PLOT?

We've heard some clichéd plots in our time, but this one really takes the biscuit. If you want the complete contrived story, check it out at www.rebelact.com. Otherwise, all you really need to know is that, regardless of the character you choose to play as, your goal is the same: find the Sacred Sword and defeat the Lord of Darkness.

Our advice is to invent your own ongoing story while you're playing. Make it something to do with a travelling freak show, or a spoof on *Conan The Barbarian* – it's much more interesting.

You won't catch me in a cheesy stereotyped plot. Oh dear...

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 350 Memory 128Mb RAM **ALSO NEEDED** 800Mb HD space **WE SAY** PIII 550 with 128Mb RAM and graphics acceleration

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Highly realistic and challenging AI • Superb physics • Near flawless lighting and shadows • Hundreds of weapons and moves • Massive levels • Great value

DOWNERS Animation is a bit stiff • Average multiplayer • Terribly clichéd plot

87 Severe entertainment

WALKTHROUGH

DON'T FALTER

Whether you choose to play as Sargon the Knight, Zoe the Amazon, Nagflar the Dwarf or Tukaram the Barbarian, two things always remain the same. The first is that you have a stupid name – that's just something you're going to have to get used to. The second common trait is that your relatively puny status will make life very difficult to begin with. This little walkthrough follows the first faltering steps of Tukaram...

1 With your sword well and truly polished, it's time to get off your fat barbaric arse and let the rivers of blood flow.

2 On a cold and misty morning you'd think the tranquil setting of these foothills is the last place you'd find trouble. Tukaram limbers up with a spot of Tai Chi by the soothing roar of a waterfall.

3 Tukaram sets off in search of things to mutilate. He chances upon an Orc on a mountain patrol. A few swipes of his sword, and Mr Orc is mincemeat. A new combo move is revealed as a reward.

4 Heading off, Tukaram finds these mountains are starting to look like a kind of secret base. He needs more experience before taking on an entire army though, so he searches for some easy prey.

5 Arriving at a small lookout post, our tattooed hero finds what he's looking for. With a few deft moves, the Orc is cut down to size and Tukaram's confidence escalates.

6 He sneaks into the base through a secret entrance on the side of the mountain and continues on. Before long, a stone block is found. Instinct says this might be worth pushing...

7 Sure enough a door opens up and another Orc comes rushing forward. Time to try out some more moves maybe...

8 The Orc is quickly dispatched and Tukaram grabs his shield for protection. His training is almost complete. Only another 17 levels, 100 weapons and 200 moves to master. A piece of piss...

Big trouble for little Alice.

Trapped inside The Fortress Of Doors – an amazing place full of trippy tunnels and floating platforms.

A 30ft tall Mad Hatter shrugs off the Jacks (seen zooming back to Alice here).

The 3D modelling in *Alice* has to be seen to be believed.

There are numerous power-ups that grant special abilities for a limited time. This is Alice in 'berserker' mode.

AMERICAN McGEE'S ALICE

***Paul Mallinson* goes through the Looking Glass and comes out the other end feeling, urgh, rather strange...**

£34.99 • EA Games • Out 15th Dec

When American McGee first dreamt up the idea of adapting Lewis Carroll's *Alice In Wonderland* he must have been tripping. In fact, come to think of it, he can't have been because, as we discovered way back in *PC ZONE* issue 94, he was driving at the time. Anyway, you get what we mean: *American McGee's Alice* is the craziest, strangest, most perverted piece of nonsense we've ever played – which is no big surprise considering the original was a nonsensical tale in the first place. *But this?*

American McGee's Alice attempts to cross fantasy and madness by reworking Carroll's *Wonderland* into something of a cross between *Hellraiser* and *It's A Knockout* – cards and chess pieces being a popular theme, as well as screaming babies, mad kids and tortured animals... Now, before you turn the page in disgust, we have to say that all of this is conducted in an altogether 'colourful' and 'entertaining' manner, and the madness that prevails reveals a rich vein of clever game design that is well worth experiencing.

GONE STRANGE

Alice, the game, kicks off with a meticulously rendered cut sequence of a fire in a little girl's bedroom. As the scene progresses you realise that it's Alice, the character, we're seeing this happen to and, as it concludes, you're left with the eerie image of Alice locked-up in a dark, grey mental asylum, plasters stuck to her waif-thin wrists. It seems she didn't survive the fire completely unscathed...

Then, while you're still trying to work out what the hell is going on, the view changes to a polygonal tunnel of light and Alice falls into Wonderland with a scream. Suddenly the White Rabbit appears dressed in top hat and tails – looking a little zombified with it. "You're late!" he yelps. "You're ugly", you think, and the White Rabbit turns and runs off. An equally mangy Cheshire Cat appears out of nowhere and tells Alice that Wonderland has gone strange. "Follow the White Rabbit," he purrs in a wonderfully velvety manner, and – as, at this point, control is relinquished – you head off down a wooden corridor to start your big adventure.

> **"*American McGee's Alice* is the craziest, strangest, most perverted piece of nonsense we've ever played"**

THIRD-PERSON

Developer Rogue has gone for a third-person viewpoint in *Alice* (the success of the *Tomb Raider* series having something to do with this?), which – in this game's case – works really well. Unlike many 'live' third-person 3D adventures, the floating camera follows the action perfectly and rarely gets in the way of the game. The same could be said of the control system, which also rates as pretty much perfect. As Rogue itself will probably admit, a large chunk of the credit for *Alice*'s immediacy must go to id's *Quake III* engine, which has been bought in to power this game. And, being *Quake*-powered, *Alice* is a doddle to play – the usual *Quake* mouse and keyboard combinations handling movement, object manipulation, weapons, all quick loading and saving, plus all the other features you take for granted in *Quake* games these days.

Alice also benefits from the *Quake III* engine's graphical prowess. Whether you're playing at basic 640 x 480, or at much higher resolutions, the game rarely fails to impress visually. Beautiful colouring and subtle, detailed 3D modelling are apparent from the outset, and the visual treats become more sophisticated and awe-inspiring as the game progresses. *American McGee's Alice* is undoubtedly one of the best-looking games ever made and later levels are so amazingly designed and wonderfully imaginative that they recompense for your efforts early on. For which you should be thankful, because *Alice* is quite a tough game overall.

RED QUEEN'S GUARDS

As Alice explores more of Wonderland, she quickly learns that the Red Queen has gone potty and is trying to take over the world. Hints are dropped of a saviour in town – and suddenly it's you controlling Alice and back in the driving seat.

Your first encounter with the Red Queen's guards comes after receiving the Vorpal Blade. This basic weapon is capable of killing most lower-order creatures with a throw or two, but is slow to reload. Other weapons collected later in the game (see box entitled Wonderland Weapons for more details) vary in usefulness and power, and using combinations of weapons becomes important to survival. Thankfully, a 'laser pen' on-screen cross-hair makes killing guards and monsters relatively easy, as long as Alice is pointing in the right direction, and can even 'gib' them into globules of gore if used up-close in their faces.

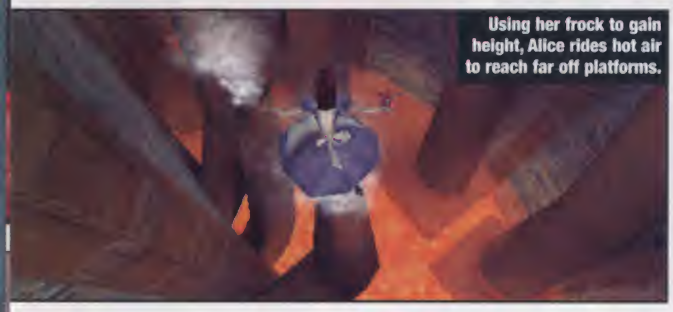
Despite the incredibly detailed look of stupidity on their faces, the Red Queen's guards are not as dumb as they first appear. Hurt them and they run off. Let them gang up on you and you're as good as dead. You might even get involved in a bit of tail-chasing around a pillar if they decide to high tail it, only to have them stop, turn and fire when you least expect it. Some even have rocket-launchers capable of blowing you to bits in seconds. Fortunately for both Alice and yourself, every dead guard (or monster for that matter) leaves behind a glowing crystal, called Meta Essence, that restores part of your health bar (red bar down left hand side of screen) upon collection.

GRAPHICS VERSUS GAMEPLAY

After an introduction to rope-swinging, an impromptu (but un-dynamic) mine shaft ride, and more words of advice from the ubiquitous Cheshire Cat, Alice arrives in a place called, ominously, The Fortress Of Doors. It is here that the game really starts to dazzle, with some fantastically imaginative level design and trippy lighting effects that illuminate the mostly platform-style action. In one room, the whole floor splits apart, revealing a swirling tunnel of light through which the floating island you're standing on passes... In another room, huge doors hurtle down this tunnel, opening and passing by you with a booming jet engine roar. The effect is stunning, but highly disorienting at the same time, and falling into this glowing abyss means instant death. You quickly begin to realise that it's better to keep your eye on the action than the scenery since progress is

Without a doubt *American McGee's Alice* is a masterpiece of light and colour.

Don't fancy yours much.



Using her frock to gain height, Alice rides hot air to reach far off platforms.

Tweedle Dum and Tweedle Dee work together to outwit you.

more or less determined by the accuracy of your leaping.

Later on, other strange creatures come into play: there's the 'Lost Soul', a monster that screams a directional wind to knock you off your ledge; man-eating mushrooms that suck you into their leathery mouths and chew you; thorn-spitting roses; zombie piranha fish; frightening, soul-sucking giant bats; death-dealing steam-powered robots; Lava monsters and hard-as-nails chess pieces among many others. Each creature has his own varying degree of intelligence and attack patterns.

While many of Alice's foes are relatively slow moving, their presence in some levels makes completing the task ahead of you extremely difficult. This is especially the case if precise platform jumping is required to complete the level – which it usually is – even on the easiest of the four skill settings. There's almost always a bottomless pit for Alice to fall into somewhere in the level. And, with the Red Queen's allies blasting you from every angle, sudden death due to falling becomes *de rigueur* for most of the game. The final quarter of *Alice* is a frightening fight for survival as you cling to any ledge available as the blows rein in from your rivals. It's truly hair-raising to experience the first time, but by the 20th attempt you'll be grating your teeth and wishing the level was over. And – if that isn't enough – there are some seriously huge 'bosses' to contend with too – many of whom take a long, long time to wear down and beat. In some ways it seems strange that Alice's designers chose to make it as hard as they did – the intense platform action being far too hard for the casual gamer, and the subject matter a bit too 'twee' for the hardcore gaming nerd. It also seems strange that, given the top-drawer graphics/modelling/animation/sound talent involved, the gameplay is so platform-based. Don't get us wrong, platform games are good but it could have been so much more.

CONSTANT VARIETY

Rather disappointingly the puzzles in *Alice* rarely deviate from the pull-the-right-lever-to-open-the-right-door school of gameplay. There are a couple of more interesting conundrums in later levels (one that sees you moving across a chessboard in the manner of a certain chess piece), but the solution is usually glaringly obvious and presents little cerebral challenge.

On the plus side, some levels take on a particular theme or style of gameplay to add variety to the adventure. In one, Alice is trapped underwater and must swim to the exit by following a helpful turtle. Then, she is pursued by a gigantic rolling ball down a corkscrew precipice. And in another, she must ride a leaf down a maze of tributaries without drowning or being eaten by horrible spitting fish, while in yet another she must traverse the inner-workings of a massive ancient clock to reach the top of it. It is this constant variety in the style and design of the levels that saves *American McGee's Alice* from oblivion.

> **"The constant variety in the style and design of the levels manages to save *American McGee's Alice* from oblivion"**

ERASE FROM HERE USING MIND RUBBERS

But all this talk has so far been about the game – we've made little or no mention of the story. And, as we've said many times before, the story is all-important. Well, without giving too much of it away: there's a clever twist in the tale that ties up the confusing cut sequence seen in the asylum at the beginning of the game, and the rest of the script is, well, OK. The dialogue and narrative do have their moments, but rarely does the story truly grip you because there's little or no interaction with non-player characters and the voice acting is so patchy. A couple of characters, the turtle in particular, sound like

WALKTHROUGH

SWIM FOR YOUR LIFE ALICE!

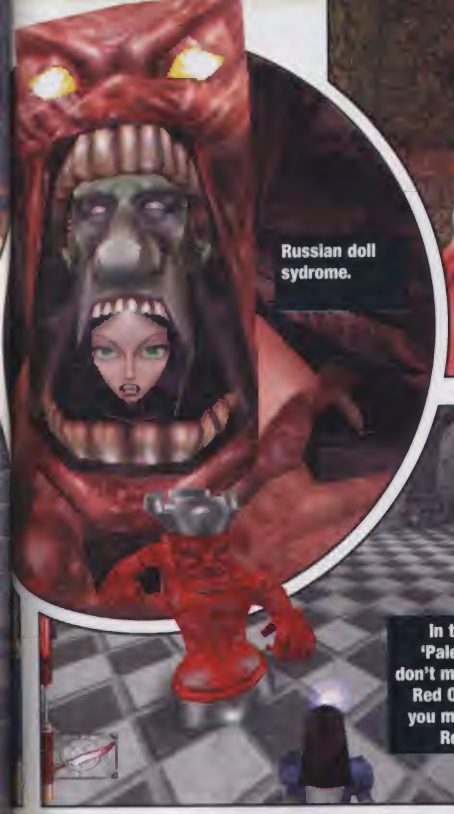
One level has you trapped underwater and swimming for your life with the help of a turtle

As long as you stay close to him, you will not drown. But the turtle's course is slow and meandering and death is frequent and horrible – it takes us back to when we used to drown Lara for a laugh. And there are also killer fishes on the way, plus falling debris – all of which must be successfully dealt with to stay alive. Thankfully, the view is stunningly beautiful, so it isn't much of a chore replaying this level again and again.

1 The lovely Alice is forced to take a dip

2 She must keep up with the turtle, while avoiding the falling stalactites

3 Keep swimming Alice! So far, so good...



Russian doll sydrome.

The Red Queen's guards up close. Will ya just look at that rendering?

One slip and it's into oblivion. And back to where you started.

In the so-called 'Pale Realm' you don't mess with the Red Queen unless you mess with the Red King first.

Spitting Image rejects – harking back to darker days when all PC adventures talked like this (*Feeble Files* anyone?). It's a pity really because some of the voices, particularly the Cheshire Cat, are spot on. It's just that the dodgy ones ruin the atmosphere and make a mockery of the serious and twisted nature of the game.

Without doubt, *American McGee's Alice* is an epic adventure filled with many wondrous sights. The love and care taken in designing *Alice* shines through in almost every aspect of the game, bar the repetitive gameplay and the patchy voice-overs.

We can't praise the music composers and sound effects artists enough – even if Alice jumping sounds like Monica Seles serving. We positively endorse the sheer variety in the levels, and the 3D environment modelling is possibly the best we've ever seen. And we kneel in awe at the programming dude who came up with that cool water reflection effect. But, we were expecting a little bit more than a 'darker' *Rayman 2*, so are slightly disappointed with the end result. *Alice* could have been a classic. The setting is wondrous but, in gameplay terms, what we have is a formulaic platform romp that is occasionally brilliant and frequently frustrating for all the wrong reasons. PZ

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor 400MHz or faster **Memory** 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 3D card, at least 600Mb HD space **SUPPORTS** Relatively OK at 640 x 480 **WE SAY** 128Mb RAM

IN PERSPECTIVE

Out of all the 3D action/adventurers on the market, we still reckon that *The Nomad Soul* has the most to offer.

American McGee's Alice

The Nomad Soul

Blair Witch Vol 1: Rustin Parr

Messiah

Heavy Metal FAKK 2

WONDERLAND WEAPONS

The weapons in *Alice* are relatively original, though some seem next to useless. Here's a quick run-down of what to expect

VORPAL BLADE
Slow to re-load, but effective at either long or short ranges. The Vorpal Blade is basic but also invaluable.

ICE WAND
This raises a protective shield of ice in front of Alice. Waste of a good weapon slot if you ask us...

DEMON DICE
We couldn't get the demon dice to work. So we don't really have any idea of what it is they do.

CARDS
When thrown, the cards home in on the nearest target. Quick-loading, but they do little damage.

JACK BOMB
Automatic flamethrower-cum-time bomb that kills many enemies at once. Or you, if you get too close.

EYE STAFF
Fires comet-style mortars into the air, which rain down on your enemies (and you if you're not careful).

MALLET
Fairly useless electro bolt-thrower that doubles as a club when close up. Bolts bounce too.

JACKS
Cool throwing stars that zip back after being thrown. They kill some monsters with one chuck.

DEADTIME WATCH
Freezes time for a limited period. Useful when being hassled in precarious places.

END

4 Oof! Falling debris and killer fish make the going difficult

5 Are we there yet? No, it seems... Glub!

6 Aaargh! No one told us about that fish!

7 Lungs bursting, Alice finally rises towards dry land

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Stupendous graphics • Fabulous soundtrack • Easy to play • Big varied levels • Some clever ideas

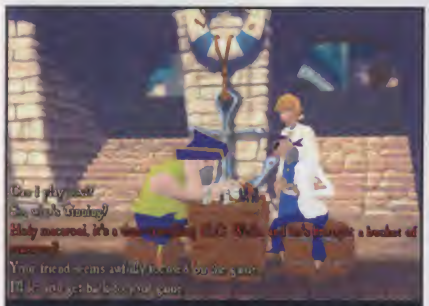
DOWNERS Linear/samey gameplay • Dodgy voice acting • Surprisingly difficult • Some weapons useless

75 Graphically and sonically excellent, but samey gameplay

Stan makes a welcome return. And you still can't trust him.

As is the norm with LucasArts games, the voice acting is superb.

Guybrush faces the Inquisition on Lucre Island.


Have you noticed how playing adventure games makes your eyes tired? Just asking.

Is that a Broken Sword in his hand?

ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND

£34.99 • Activision • Out now

Give typewriters to an infinite number of monkeys and they'll eventually come up with the complete works of Shakespeare. You'd only need one to write this review, but then *Mark Hill* would be out of a job

PC ZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

Computer games are making strides in provoking meaningful responses in players. They have the ability to terrify us with a palpable atmosphere of pure horror in games such as *System Shock 2*, and make us care for believable characters and their fortunes in games such as *Planescape: Torment* and *Deus Ex*. But, along the way, they seem to have forgotten the skill most artists consider the hardest to master: the ability to make us laugh.

Most people's closest memory of a good laugh during a game is probably watching scientists fall down a lift shaft in *Half-Life*. But even that was a result of a shocking moment delivered with impeccable timing – like Marvin's head being blown to pieces accidentally in the back of Vincent and Jules' car in *Pulp Fiction* – not an example of finely crafted comedy. Traditionally, the format that has fitted comedy most perfectly has been the point 'n' click adventure, which LucasArts managed to make consistently and riotously funny with titles like *Sam & Max*, *Day Of The Tentacle* and *Monkey Island 1* & *2*.

Whether comedy disappeared from games because of the waning popularity of adventures or whether adventure games died out because all the comic talent packed its bags and got a proper job remains a mystery. The only thing that concerns us right now is that LucasArts has finally opened the cage to its Adventure Games Department and let all the monkeys loose for another puzzle-packed romp.

And guess what? It's actually bloody funny.

APEING AROUND

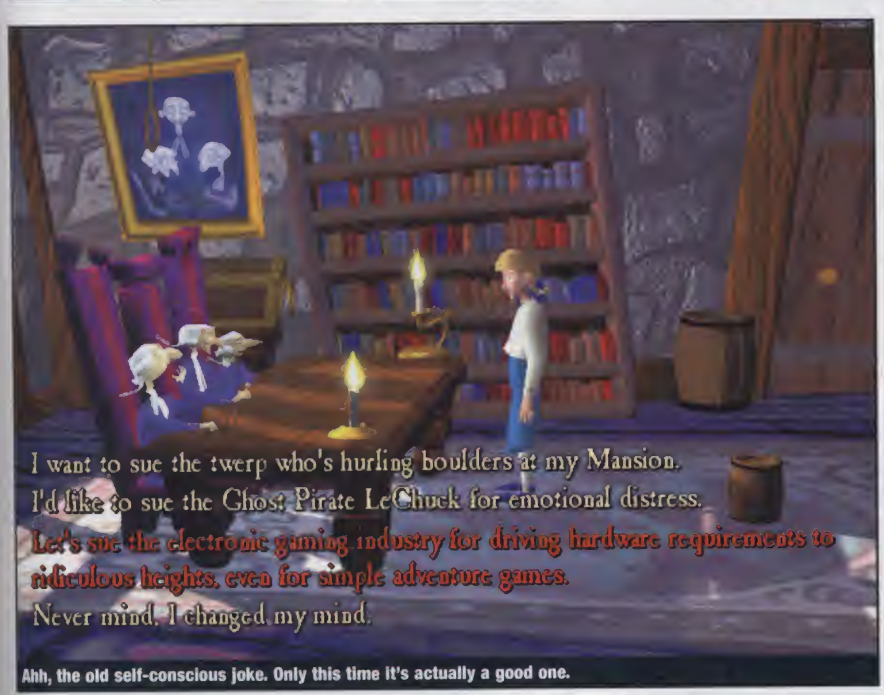
The plot sees Guybrush and Elaine returning to Melee Island from their long honeymoon cruise. So long, in fact, that Elaine

Fancy a Guybrush hamburger with fries?

No *Monkey* game would be complete without a Grog machine that never works.

This place looks familiar. There's a plump voodoo lady inside.

The inventory works as in *Grim*, but some of the problems have been ironed out.



Ahh, the old self-conscious joke. Only this time it's actually a good one.

The developers seem to have a strong aversion to sushi.

As well as insult swordfighting, there's insult darts, insult arm-wrestling...

DIE LAUGHING

In what could be seen as a two-fingered salute to the gaming press, or a subversive and metaphoric gag that reflects the post-modern mood of the last decade, the adventure games of the last couple of years have been full of morbid imagery and themes of death and resurrection.

In *Grim Fandango* your character, Manny Calavera, worked for the Department of Death as a travel agent for souls travelling to the Land of the Dead. In *Discworld Noir* you start the game with a flashback of your character's death, while the lamentable *Simon The Sorcerer 3D* (reviewed on page 77) begins with the young wizard waking up on a slab after being brought back from the dead, forcing you to complete some elementary puzzles before his resurrection is solve.

In *Escape*, the topic is once again fundamental at the start of the game, as Elaine is declared dead and you must help her to prove she is very much alive.

The death theme continues

has been declared dead and thus is no longer the governor of the island. Not only that, there is an Australian land developer who has been acquiring every property he can lay his hands on by challenging and defeating all the pirates to insult duels.

Saving the governor's mansion, clearing his name after being framed for a bank robbery and obtaining the formidable voodoo Ultimate Insult are just some of the jobs Guybrush sets about completing. He meets almost all the characters from *The Secret Of Monkey Island* along the way, not least of which is his ever-present opponent the ghost pirate LeChuck.

But a few things have moved on since then, and a quick look at our Games Review Checklist tells us it must have something to do with Graphics, Interface, Sound and Gameplay.

The first of those is the most obvious improvement and does much to scrub away the stained memory of *Monkey Island 3*, which used some very patchy Shockwave-looking graphics. *Escape* uses an updated version of the GRIME engine first used in the wonderful *Grim Fandango*, with 3D via a fixed camera, a complete absence of pointing and clicking, and a very simple but extremely functional interface. While I spent a lot of time stroking my unsupported mouse, longing for the days when you were in control of an almighty pointer on the screen, complete with action instructions and a catalogue of items, I have to confess running around using only the keyboard works pretty well. Admittedly, I still can't understand why the GRIME engine won't allow the option of using a mouse.

"The music is great and all the voice acting is nothing short of superb – essential for a game with non-stop dialogue"

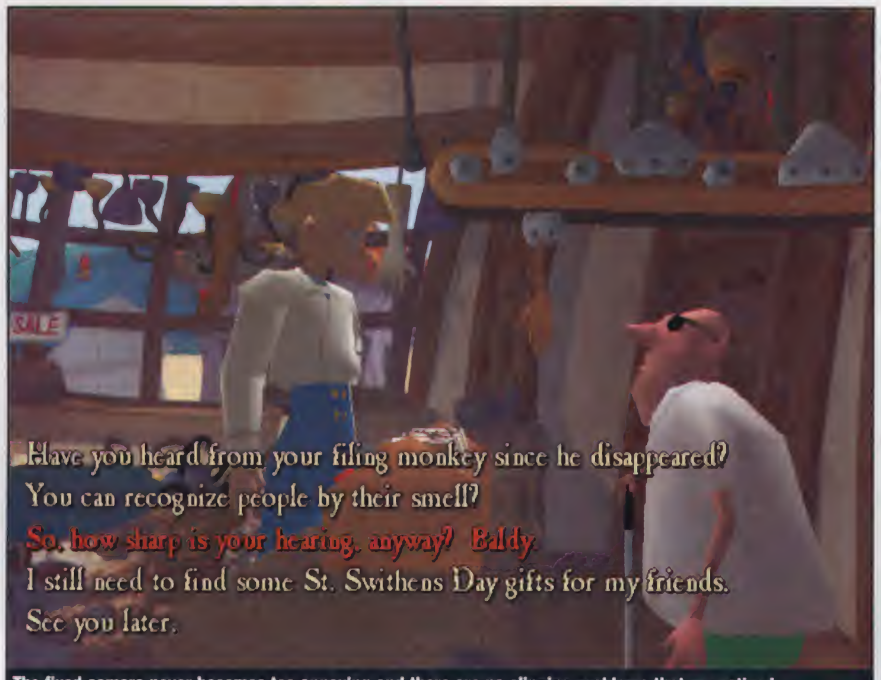
As for the sound, the music is as great as it ever was and all the voice acting is nothing short of superb. And, for a game with non-stop dialogue, this is an essential element. But there's another thing that it is essential to get right, and that's the puzzles.

USE PUZZLE ON JOKE

Adventure game puzzles always stretch the limits of reason, with their warped logic and a very limited freedom that only allows you to do what the game wants you to do. Perhaps the reason adventure games have been so far and few between of late is their failure to move beyond the 'use object on other object' stage.

Making it 3D and taking away the point 'n' click aspect doesn't really count as progress. The massively underrated *Discworld Noir* is the only adventure game to have tried something new, with a system of clues that could be used on each other to make logical connections, and a werewolf act where you used scents more than objects. But the game was almost wholly ignored and its inventive thinking went largely unnoticed.

Escape From Monkey Island doesn't do anything new in this area, and simply continues the tradition of earlier *Monkey* games with a healthy dose of *Grim Fandango*-ness. The interplay between the frustration of being stuck and the elation at finally solving the offending puzzle is at the core of adventure gameplay, and *Escape* manages to keep a nice balance most of the time.



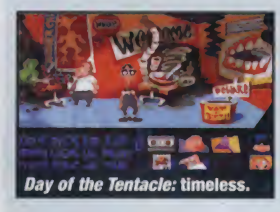
The fixed camera never becomes too annoying and there are no clipping problems that we noticed.

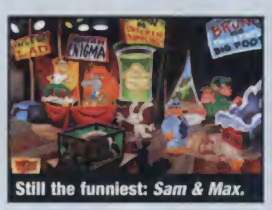
THE FUNNIEST GAME EVER?

***Escape* is probably the funniest game to come out for a couple of years (barring the unintentionally hilarious *Arcatera*), but it still has a long way to go to compete with the great names.**

***Grim Fandango* and *Discworld Noir* are played less for laughs than for dark entertainment, and you have to go back to The Big Three (*The Secret Of Monkey Island*, *Day Of The Tentacle* and *Sam & Max*) to witness the kind of top-drawer comedy that films, sitcoms and stand-up shows would be envious of.**

Personally, I think *Sam & Max Hit The Road* is absolutely untouchable, and it's very heartening to see the same people behind it making *Escape*. If LucasArts will only make adventure games if they're sure-fire hit sequels, how about *Sam & Max 2*?


Day of the Tentacle: timeless.


Still the funniest: *Sam & Max.*

Most of the puzzles make sense, although there are some you're more likely to solve by the good old method of trying everything in your inventory with everything in the game, rather than through abstract reasoning. The US edition of the game actually comes with a full walkthrough, and although this may encourage lazy and constant cheating, it at least removes the annoyance of being stuck for weeks.

IN PERSPECTIVE

The first two *Monkeys* might look a bit long in the paw, but their gameplay hasn't aged a bit. You can still play them now and laugh all the way to the end. *Monkey 3* looks very grotty and isn't particularly funny, so *Escape* is a welcome return to form.

The Secret of Monkey Island

Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge

The Curse of Monkey Island

Escape From Monkey Island

IN IT FOR THE MONKEY

Escape From Monkey Island does its damnedest to go back to its roots and re-enact the magic of the first two games (and try to pretend the third one never happened). In fact, it displays some positively cannibalistic tendencies as it roots around the old titles for plotlines, characters and jokes. Not that this is entirely a bad thing, since they were both masterpieces with brilliant plotlines, hilarious jokes and unforgettable characters. If you haven't played them you'll miss a lot of the references.

On the other hand, long-time fans are less likely to be impressed by what is largely a collection of old ideas. However, they are executed with so much class that it makes the whole thing more than worthwhile, and there are enough new ones to captivate your attention all the way through.

But despite the cleverly subversive jokes that pop up now and again, you can't escape the feeling that LucasArts is playing it safe, resurrecting a big name instead of developing an original idea like it did with *Grim Fandango*. Maybe it was the only way the Ideas unit could convince the Finance section that making an adventure game was a Viable Option.

The theme of commerciality is a recurrent one throughout *Escape*, mostly because the makers fully understand the cynical (and probably justified) view seasoned gamers are likely to take. There are gentle jabs at George Lucas (someone give them a medal!), when a former termite trainer complains that most of the money his act earned went to the head of the LucreArts Entertainment Consortium.

> **"*Escape* does its damnedest to re-enact the magic of the first games' hilarious jokes, great plots and unforgettable characters"**

One of the main plot elements involves someone trying to buy all the islands to turn them into a sort of pirate Disneyland, and Charles L Charles transforms the legendary grog-soaked Scumm Bar into a sanitised and fashionable sushi bar. Marketing madness reaches its peak on Tambalaya Island where you can find Planet Threepwood (selling Guybrush hamburgers) and Starbucaneer's Coffee.

We haven't come across anyone resembling Jar Jar Binks, but we wouldn't be surprised to see some *Phantom Menace* satirisation (after all, *Escape* does a much better job of recapturing the spirit of the *Monkey* series than *Episode I* did with Star Wars).

It's easy to be cynical and view it as a game manufactured by a group of workers paid to come up with jokes rather than the spontaneous outburst of one person's talent. But while Ron Gilbert has had absolutely nothing to do with *Escape*, you should remember that *The Simpsons* – possibly the funniest thing ever created – is the work of a group of writers paid to come up with jokes rather than the single mind of Matt Groening. Most important, however, is the fact that the main men behind *Monkey 4* are the ones who brought us *Sam & Max* – possibly the funniest adventure ever created.

Escape From Monkey Island is an enjoyable, professionally created and amiably funny game. It doesn't do anything startlingly new, but is still an essential title for the hordes of people who grew up playing adventures. Because you are still out there, aren't you? PZ

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P200 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** A 4Mb 3D card **WE SAY** P300 and 64Mb RAM help a lot, and we recommend finding the extra 1Gb of hard drive space to do a full install – it will save you a lot of loading-time hassles

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Funny • Good, and mostly logical, puzzles • Great voice acting

DOWNERS Graphics only 640 x 480 • Relies too much on the original *Monkey* games

82 That's the third funniest *Monkey* game I've ever seen

WALKTHROUGH

GUYBRUSH, MIGHTY PIRATE

Like *Monkey 3*, *Escape* begins with Guybrush trapped and needing to solve a simple puzzle, while you learn how the interface works.

1 Are those hot coals on that stand? How could you resist kicking them?

2 Guybrush must show off some nifty soccer skills to pick up the coals.

3 The trusty cannon can always be relied to go off if you put something hot on it.

4 Watch the attacking pirate ship sink without a trace. That was some powerful cannon...

END

○ THE HOTTEST GAMES ○ THE COOLEST KIT ○ THE WACKIEST WEBSITES

for the PC generation

NEW!

The rear view suggests that a left turn might have been in order.

Set the controls for the heart of the sun. On second thoughts...

A judicious handbrake turn can make up valuable seconds.

Water effects and everything.

"You want to get that looked at, mate."

COLIN MCRAE RALLY 2.0

£34.99 • Codemasters • Out now

It's bigger, it's better, it's rougher, it's tougher. It's *Steve Hill*

Almost universally regarded as the benchmark rallying game since its release, the original *Colin McRae Rally* was born into a world largely devoid of such quality off-road thrills. The goalposts have moved somewhat since then though, and this respectably timed upgrade is flanked by a number of decent rival titles. The situation hasn't yet got as out of hand as that afflicting the Formula One genre, but the budding rally game purchaser is still faced with a mildly bewildering choice. Does he go for the extremely authentic *Rally Championship*? Should he plump for the eager-to-please *Rally Masters*? Or will the arcade-oriented *V-Rally 2* suffice?

PC ZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

The answer to all of the above is now a great big 'No' (bottomless pockets and a sick rally obsession notwithstanding). *Colin McRae* is back, and has majestically retained the crown. That's *McRae*, the game, obviously, as the actual driver has long since sullied his title hopes, his prospects not helped when he inadvertently careered off the road in Corsica. It took over an hour to extricate McRae and co-driver Nicky Grist from the twisted wreckage of their £350,000 Ford Focus, and McRae underwent a three-hour operation to repair a shattered cheekbone. The taciturn Scot now has a metal plate screwed under his left eye like some kind of bionic man. A terrible business clearly, but it makes you wonder what Codemasters would have done had McRae actually been killed. Withdrawn the game as a mark of respect? Or maybe rushed it out in a commemorative coffin-shaped box?

BROKEN FACE

We'll probably never know. What we do know is that the game is here, and it's a belter. You might not be able to launch the car down a precipice and cause reparable damage to your face, but you can do pretty much everything else. In addition to the hardcore 'proper' rally stages, an all-new arcade mode allows you to take on up to five other opponents in a simplistic championship. Simplistic it might be, but simple it isn't, and several hours of frantic driving are required to open up further stages.

This is merely an hors d'oeuvre though. The real action is to be had in the rally championship, ploughing a lone furrow through the backwaters of Finland, Sweden, Italy, France, Australia, Kenya, Greece and the United Kingdom, each throwing up unique environmental hazards. It's a daunting prospect, but one that is never less than compulsive. Much like the original, *Colin McRae Rally 2.0* manages to be instantly accessible without ever making any concessions. The Novice level shouldn't provide too many problems, but the step up to Intermediate is marked, and it soon becomes apparent that you're in for the long haul. As for Expert, only professional rally drivers need apply.

> **"Much like the original *Colin McRae Rally 2.0* manages to be instantly accessible without ever making any concessions"**

SNOW BEAST

Obvious as it seems, it's the handling of the cars that provides the key to the game's success. It's exquisitely modelled, with every nuance of the road surface translated through the wheels and into your fingers. The varying settings make a huge difference, and specific techniques are required to master tarmac, mud, gravel and even snow, each of which can be further affected by adverse weather conditions.

There is simply no getting around the fact that you have to drive properly. Attempting to plough through sections by

"A miserable day? I quite like a bit of drizzle so stick to the facts."

The head-to-head challenge mode. Think of it as a life-size Scalextric.

Even the arcade section is almost worth the admission fee alone.

"Check out me Toyota Corolla man. It's wicked!"

What now for man with rebuilt face?

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** PII 450 **Memory** 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 32Mb 3D card **WE SAY** Turn the detail down and you'll get away with a P400, 64Mb RAM and a 16Mb 3D card

IN PERSPECTIVE

While pretenders to the crown have come and gone, Codemasters has sat back and bided its time. *McRae 2.0* has comfortably abolished the opposition and can now rightfully claim to be the best rally game in the world… ever!

Colin McRae Rally 2.0

Rally Masters

Rally Championship

Sega Rally 2

V-Rally 2

bouncing off the sides at full speed just won't wash. Split-second braking allied to adroit manoeuvring is required, and your co-driver (again voiced by McRae stalwart Nicky Grist) becomes an essential part of the game. To succeed, the car has to be pushed to the absolute limit, and you can sense when you're putting in a good time, not least when you forget to breathe.

ACCIDENT STREET

Should you plough off the road (and you will), the penance takes the form of more than a few lost seconds. A detailed damage model sees the car deteriorate convincingly, with shattered windows, buckled bonnets, cracked spoilers and trailing bumpers all adversely affecting handling. Not to mention the impairment of gearbox, steering, and brakes, to name but a few. Restricted repairs can be made between every other stage, and this presents a dilemma. Going hell for leather in the first stage could result in barely being able to crawl around the second.

The key is to find the perfect balance between risk and caution. This can only be achieved by being absolutely on the money all the time. Concentration is paramount, and taking your eye off the ball for a second can be fatal. To the untrained mind, this might not sound like a lot of fun, but the perverse pleasure is in constantly pushing yourself to the limit so that you can make things even harder for yourself. That's essentially the crux of gaming, of which *Colin McRae 2.0* is a finely honed example.

CONSOLE YOURSELF

Waaaaaid-a-minute though. Wasn't this out on PlayStation last June? True, and if you want to recreate that experience, you can turn the detail right down and smear the monitor with Vaseline. The PC really does the graphics justice, enabling you to read the cars' number plates and see more than 6ft into the distance. Excellent use of light and shadow has been made, and with the morning sun glinting through a Finnish forest at dawn, hell, it's almost romantic.

That's enough of that kind of talk though. More importantly, it's a superb driving experience that will last you months, if not years. While the real Colin McRae flounders (he finished The Rally of Great Britain upside-down), the game that carries his name goes from strength to strength, providing a rare example of a franchise that is arguably more well known than its endorsee. Whereas the dour Scotsman could walk in here largely unnoticed, there's simply no ignoring this game. PCZ

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Immaculate handling • Glorious graphics • Challenging tracks

DOWNERS Fictional driver names • Glorified version of a six-month-old PlayStation game

86 It's only bleeding rallying

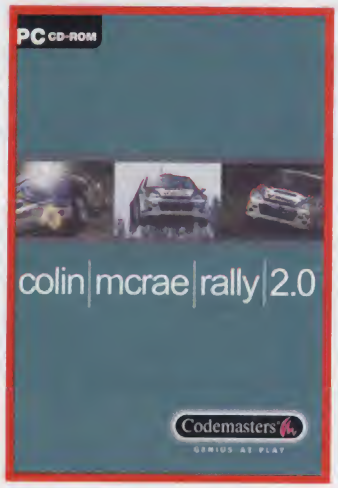
TOP DOG FOR CHRISTMAS

EXCLUSIVE TO HMV

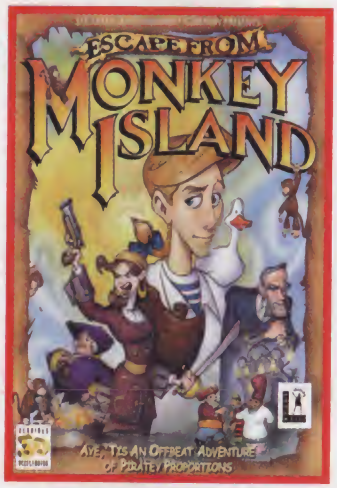
FREE

HMV CD wallet worth £9.99 when you buy selected games

Offer only applies to games bearing this sticker.
Subject to availability while stocks last at participating stores only.
Free item may differ from product shown.

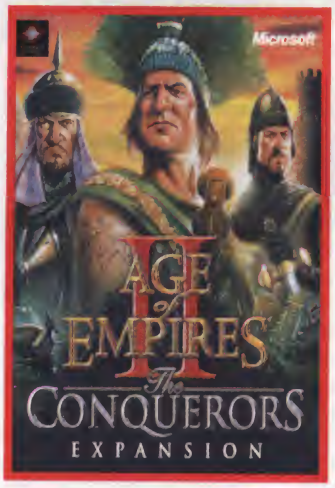


COLIN McRAE RALLY 2.0



ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND

TOMB RAIDER CHRONICLES



AGE OF EMPIRES II: THE CONQUERORS EXPANSION

buy online at
www.hmv.co.uk

topdogforgames

HMV

buy now from over 100 stores nationwide or 0870 5 33 45 78

SIMON THE SORCERER 3D

£34.99 • Hasbro Interactive • Out now

After waiting in quiet anticipation for months, *Mark Hill* throws down his pointy hat and stomps all over it

This can be a cruel job. There are times when playing a game is like having your spinal cord carved slowly with a rusty 15th century saw, but you have to keep on playing because you're being paid to do it. Other times it's the reviewer who has to be brutally cruel, like a vet shooting a horse with a broken leg, because it can't walk and is in incredible pain. *Simon The Sorcerer 3D* has the misfortune to bring out both sides of the job.

A box in the corner of the screen shows you what Simon can see, and thus examine and interact with. The problem is that the massive landscape is mostly barren and of the handful of things you come across only a few manage to grab his attention.

Did we mention it's massive? You could literally run around for hours without seeing a thing of interest, or knowing where you're supposed to go. This is meant to be part of the open-ended nature of the game, but it ignores one of the most fundamental rules of all adventure games: always let the player know what they're supposed to do next. Open-endedness doesn't mean giving the player the freedom to get totally lost with no clue as to what to do next and occasionally stumbling on to a puzzle, as *Deus Ex* demonstrates so well.

"We tried very hard to like it. But when a game has as many broken legs as this, the kindest thing to do is shoot it"

Having looked forward to it for the best part of the year and being positively ravenous for a proper adventure game, we tried very hard to like it. We tried so hard that blood started to come out of our ears. We tried to laugh at the jokes instead of wincing, to be interested in the puzzles instead of distressed.

But to no avail. When a game has as many broken legs as this, the kindest thing to do is shoot it.

Even selecting an object from your inventory and using it is long and fastidious.

THE RACK

If you've played the recent atrocities that were the new versions of *Pong* and *Breakout*, you should have no problem identifying this game's large blocky polygons, the complete lack of detail (in backgrounds, objects or faces) and the bright colour overkill. Because you're actually walking through it, and can even select a first-person perspective to see it all with, the effect is much worse than watching your paddle slide across the screen in *Pong*.

The awful controls and interface do nothing to help matters, and neither do the often abysmal camera angles (which put both the original *Tomb Raider* and *Nocturne* to shame) or the extremely restrictive nature of the gameplay.

FINGERSCREWS

We won't go into the voices, because we don't want to be too insulting, but suffice to say Simon himself comes across as a really cocky little shit. The dialogue could probably win awards for its monumental failure to be funny. The jokes are either the poor attempts at humour a half-baked hack such as myself would come up with, or supposedly wittily self-conscious ones (eg "Looks like your typical fantasy game golem to me"). This type of thing has been done before, and better.

It doesn't seem to know who it's aimed at, either. The look of the thing and the puerile humour should appeal to children more than adults, but then you come across references to incest, nun pornography and *Deliverance*.

There are some clever ideas if you're prepared to stick with it, but you can't help feeling they should have opted for the old point-and-click formula (yes, we know nobody would release it) rather than a wacky *Tomb Raider* puzzle game. Adventure games may be a rarity, but that's really no excuse for being rubbish. PCZ

IN PERSPECTIVE

If you want to run around a lot, the brilliant *LBA 2* should do the trick. *Grim Fandango* and *Discworld Noir* are still excellent games, and you can turn to page 70 to see what we thought about the latest *Monkey Island* game.

Little Big Adventure 2

Grim Fandango

Return To Monkey Island

Discworld Noir

Simon 3D

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P233 Memory 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** A 3D card **WE SAY** A better PC will make it run faster but not look much better

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS It's a British adventure game • Some interesting ideas • It has puzzles

DOWNERS Awful graphics and engine • Not funny • Misunderstands the meaning of 'open-ended'

40 The magic has disappeared

This is your fairy godmother, who "tells you how the game works".

A participant in the infamous gnome-throwing competition.

Never trust a man with flat feet. Or a phoney redneck accent.

Killed by some murderous woodworm. Laugh? We nearly split our sides.

"What you looking at?" One disguise you won't be pulling off.

HITMAN: CODENAME 47

£29.99 • Eidos Interactive • Out now

***Paul Presley* took the role of a 'cleaner' a bit too literally. We'll never be able to look at a maid's costume in quite the same way**

I've said it before and I'll no doubt say it again, a good musical score is worth its weight in gold. *Hitman* has some of the best tunes I've heard all year – I've been humming the main theme music for weeks now. Each level's music has its own unique identity, straying free of cliché but dynamically altering to suit the on-screen action as needed.

PC ZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

It's amazing how often this side of game development is just taken for granted by most people. So when a score manages to jump out and actually grab your attention, to hang around and enhance the overall atmosphere of the game rather than just fade away into the background, it deserves applause. Simon Holm, IO Interactive's music man, take a bow.

But it would be for nought if the rest of the game didn't match up to it. Luckily, *Hitman* is easily one of the most absorbingly engrossing games to arrive for a long time. True, the controls take a little getting used to at first. And yes, the lack of any mid-game save options (aside from the strange credit/fixed-point system that restarts you in odd locations but doesn't actually save the game) is more annoying than trying to think of humourous metaphors at three o'clock in the morning. It's just fortunate for both IO and the game itself that *Hitman* has enough of that 'just one more go' spirit to balance out the frustration caused by being constantly forced to have that 'one more go'.

IN PERSPECTIVE

Contemporary thinker-shooters (which basically means you can die after a couple of shots) are all the rage at the moment. They're all pretty good, so it's more a case of what kind of setting you're after. *Project IGI* is your Bond-style spy romp, *Deus Ex* is your *Matrix*-style cyber thriller and *Metal Gear Solid* is your crappy-style Playstation conversion.

Deus Ex

Hitman

Project IGI

Metal Gear Solid

NUMBER CRUNCHING

As the name suggests, you're playing the role of '47', a mysterious figure with no past who wakes up one morning to find himself strapped to a table and told he's an assassin. After that (and a brief training session with a far too easily pleased instructor – "You've opened a door! Very good, you're the best we've had for a long time!"), you're thrown into the murky world of organised crime, taking out mob bosses, triad leaders and countless thugs and ne'er-do-wells in Hong Kong, Columbia, Budapest and Rotterdam.

I said 'Sit', dammit.

It's the way each level is structured that keeps you coming back, time after time, death after death. Missions are always more than just 'kill the target' affairs (although they do make up the meat of the game), and it's usually left up to you as to how you go about it. Snipe from a distant rooftop or sneak up behind with a knife to the throat – whatever you think is best.

Disguises play an important role, and there is nothing quite as classy as initiating a gunfight, switching clothes, then strolling casually away while bodyguards and henchmen run around like headless chickens trying to figure out what's going on.

START ALL OVER AGAIN

If *Hitman* does have a problem, it's that it does such a fine job of creating an engrossing atmosphere that you start wanting to go beyond the limits of the technology on offer. An example to back up that rather convoluted claim would be during an early hit involving a meeting between gang bosses in a park, a patrolling helicopter and a sniper rifle. Essentially, you're expected to take a position on a nearby rooftop and kill the target during the meet. Unfortunately,

Look, if it's about that parking ticket...

Sick and/or wrong.

'47' does his bit for the rainforest.

What did you expect, subtlety?

this does leave you rather open to fire from the chopper. Real-life sniper friends of mine assure me that the preferred location for taking the shot would be from within a top-floor window rather than leaving yourself vulnerable on the outside. But making every building in the game accessible would probably be asking too much of both the programmers and the current levels of PC hardware. That sort of thing.

Apart from that, there are all the usual niggles that accompany modern action-shooters. For example, limited variety in NPC modelling, giving the impression that the criminal underworld has made more progress in the world of human cloning than the world's scientific community ever could. An occasional lack of polish in cut-scene triggering means that sometimes a raging gunfight will suddenly pause as a moment of illogical exposition takes place. The third-person, behind-the-head camera view also hinders you from time to time, blocking targets or forcing you to worry about viewing angles rather than gameplay.

"I'm no prude, but there's something not right about silently approaching a hapless guard from behind and garrotting him"

SACRÉ BLEU

Oh, there is one other thing. It's a minor point really and I don't know why I'm even bothering to bring it up, but, well, the thing is, *Hitman* is perhaps the first game in history to actually make me feel a bit uneasy about my actions. I'm not talking about being scared or anything. Hell, games scare me all the time. I can't play *Half-Life* for more than 15 minutes at a time before breaking out in a sweat and reaching for the disposable nappies. No, scared is one thing. Morally disturbed is quite another.

Now I'm no prude. I laughed my way through *Kingpin*, hooted and hollered at *Carmageddon* and grinned with glee at *Grand Theft Auto*. But there's something not quite right about silently approaching a security guard from behind and garrotting him with a piece of razor wire, his limbs flailing in a macabre dance of death, then dragging his corpse out of sight and moving on to the next victim. Especially when the guard isn't your target but just an obstacle along the way.

Still, *Hitman* more than makes up in style for what it lacks in moral integrity. It's the first game in recent history to recreate all the violent beauty of Luc Besson's *Leon*. If *Deus Ex* is pure Hollywood excess, *Hitman* is modern French cinema at its finest (that's a good thing, by the way). I haven't come across a game this addictively playable since *Hidden & Dangerous*.

On the plus side, *Hitman* isn't nearly as bugged. And it's far cooler. In fact, it would be fair to say there hasn't been a cooler central game character in years. For that reason alone it's worth your 30 quid. PZ

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** PII 266 **Memory** 64Mb RAM **WE SAY** It's playable on a PII, but even with a truckload of RAM you'll have serious problems above 640x480. We'd recommend a PIII 600 minimum with a TNT2 card at the very least

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Atmospheric and absorbing gameplay • Original weapon usage • Brilliant musical score

DOWNERS Camera sometimes obscured by player's head • No mid-game save options • Can make you feel a little uneasy about life

85 Innovative immorality

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2

£34.99 • Activision • Out now

***Paul Mallinson* explains how to become a good skateboarder without losing the skin off your knees**

At last, a conversion worth piping up about.

Professional skateboarders are incredible athletes – take our word for it. As anyone who's ever taken to a board knows, it ain't easy to stay on it once it's moving (cue flashbacks of a misspent youth, bleeding elbows flayed raw and scabby knees).

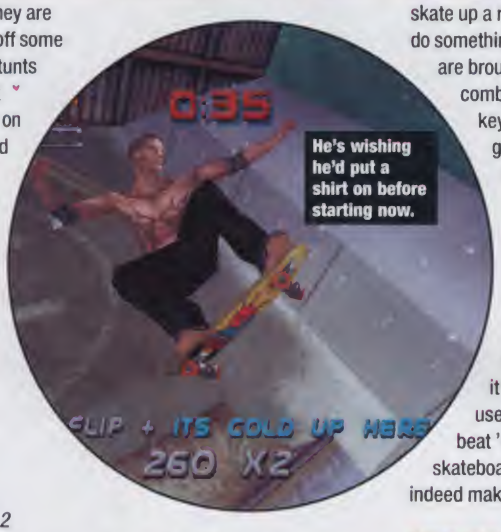
True skate pros – like Mr Tony Hawk, the guy Activision is pinning all its hopes on for this game – are not only capable of staying on their boards for more than five seconds, but they are also capable of pulling-off some of the craziest mid-air stunts imaginable. And without killing themselves. How on earth they do it is beyond us, but it is obvious from playing this game that a few broken limbs and the odd skin graft are all part of the learning process, and that the more scars you have, the better you are at skateboarding…

QUICK THINKING REQUIRED

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2 provides *the* opportunity to experience all the thrills and spills of the real thing – by either creating a skater in your own image, then improving them and making a professional career out of it, or by assuming the role of an existing skate champ, of which there are 13 real examples to choose from in the game.

By its nature, skateboarding is an extremely fast sport, requiring not only deft foot/board work, but also some pretty quick thinking. In competition, professional skateboarders have to do as many 'flash' tricks as possible within a certain period of time, and to do this they need to utilise every available surface, curve and rail they encounter along the way. You have to do this too as you hurtle up half and quarter pipes at 100mph, praying to not only land *feet first*, but also to scrape a few points in the process.

It's not easy, we can say that, and bone-crunching falls (complete with cool blood spurts) are order of the day for, well, everyone bar the most learned of players.



He's wishing he'd put a shirt on before starting now.

CONSOLE ROOTS

THPS2 is very 'console-y' in look and feel (which is no surprise, since it shares the same code as it's already released PlayStation and Dreamcast cousins), but in our minds benefits hugely from this because the control system is piss simple, as well as being difficult to master.

Basic skate moves, such as 'ollies' (jumps) and spins, are easily combined using the space bar and arrow keys. Other, more complex stunts, such as flips (when you spin the board while in the air), grinds (when you slide along a surface on the board) and lip tricks (when you skate up a ramp or pipe, stop and do something fancy on the edge) are brought into play using a combination of four 'action' keys (kick/flip, grind/slide, grip/grab and 'special') and two 'stance' keys. Initially it takes some getting used to, but like a good beat 'em up – and like *real* skateboarding – practice does indeed make perfect.

> **"*THPS2* is a truly splendiferous sight in full flight and has *the* baddest-assed soundtrack"**

MIND THE GAP

The courses you ride differ in scale and complexity and come littered with rails, ramps, half-pipes and gaps – all of which can be ridden/used in conjunction with various flip/grab tricks to earn points. Gaps – invisible triggers that activate when you jump from one part of the course to another – are hugely important and can earn big points, or even open a secret area, if uncovered.

Whether you're playing in single-player mode or in any of the hilarious and worthwhile multiplayer modes (skate tag anyone?!), the basic aim is to amass points quickly by skating every available gap in every available permutation of moves. The more variety in your act, the higher your points total at the end of the heat. And what do points make? That's right: *cold, hard cash*, which can then be spent either improving your skater's 10 adjustable stats or adding to their repertoire of mind-boggling tricks.

CAN'T HAVE EVERYTHING

Fortunately for the longevity of this game, not all the courses are available when you start off. The completion of various tasks (for example, collecting floating letters to spell the word S-K-A-T-E, or jumping three 'hangtime' gaps), plus the breaking of certain points barriers in Career mode opens subsequent levels, which really pushes you to do well. Not only that, but when secret switches are tripped, certain sections of the course change radically and new gaps are created, which is great.

Every third course unlocked is a competition that you must compete in to unlock the next area. Competitions are difficult because you actually have to go up against Tony Hawk and other real-life pros and come at least third to progress. Needless to say, it takes hours and hours of practice to get even a bronze medal, but when you do eventually pull it off you'll be punching the air, and anyone watching will think you're a god. In fact, a good player in *THPS2* will draw a crowd around their monitor – just like a good skater attracting a throng of spectators around a drained-out pool in the real world. It's that good to watch.

Along with the eight Career courses there are 12 custom courses available. And if that isn't enough, a park editor has been included as well – allowing you to create, save and swap your own parks if you so wish. We mucked around with it (see the results on the *ZONE* cover CD next month), and although limited, we've gotta admit that we were impressed by how easy it was to make a decent park in no time at all. And the resulting files were little more than 5K in size, facilitating their distribution via cyberspace.

This addresses the issue of longevity to a further degree, although it is a pity you can't map your own textures onto your park… Still, I guess you can't have everything.

LITTLE TO MOAN ABOUT

Graphically, there's little to moan about, and aside from the odd glitch (probably more to do with my graphics card than the software) and the fact that there doesn't seem to be any lens flare, *THPS2* is an absolutely splendiferous sight in full flight.

Sonically, though, it's in another dimension. If, like your humble reviewer here, you're into your skate punk music, then the names Rage Against The Machine and Bad Religion will mean something to you. If you're *not* into your skate punk music… well, don't despair because there's some fantastic hip-hop in there, too. Do the names Dub Pistols, Chuck D and Naughty By Nature mean anything to you? Yes, that's right: *THPS2* has the baddest-assed soundtrack of any PC game doing the rounds at the moment, and it deserves to be cranked up loud so that it really annoys the neighbours.

If there *is* a downside to *THPS2* it's got to be the manual, which dedicates more space to the bloody licence agreement than it does to the control system. Aside from that, this is a diamond game – it's hard, it's hip, it's original and it's fun. Skate the Tony Hawk's way and you can't go wrong. PCZ

IN PERSPECTIVE

MTV Skateboarding (reviewed on p94) boasts another great soundtrack, but sadly the game is not in the same league as *Tony Hawk's*. But if you're after more extreme sports involving violent and hilarious crashes, *Motocross Madness* should do the trick – this time on a motorbike.

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2

MTV Skateboarding

Motocross Madness 2

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P200 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 3D card, approx 400Mb hard drive space **SUPPORTS** All major soundcards, 3D cards and game pads **WE SAY** Min spec OK at 640x480, but more power is required to get the best out of it

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Feels great • Easy to play • Hard to beat • Rewarding and fun • Packed full of detail • Brilliant soundtrack • Great graphics and animation • Course designer

DOWNERS Requires patience and skill • Course designer limited • Crap manual

88 The coolest PC game around

Tony Hawk is the only professional skateboarder to have successfully nailed the legendary 900° vertical rotation.

When you've finished skating you can play back a recording to check how you did.

To the player, most of the superb visual touches will be lost because the need to concentrate is just so great.

'Air' tricks, like the Melon, earn points for the length of time you hold them. If you land properly, that is.

Looks like that nose is being truly ground.

Try skating across every surface – you never know what might happen.

Win money, then spend it on stats to improve your skills.

PC ZONE PARK

We had a go at creating our own parks using the park editor. We agree: they fall just short of rubbish – check next month's cover CD and find out for yourself. Of course, you'll be able to do a lot better. Send us your home-made parks via email (letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk) and we'll make a compilation on our cover disc – then we'll see whose park's the best!

Make your park by dropping various-shaped tiles onto a grid size of your choosing.

Then add your own gaps. Give them names and points awarded for 'nailing' them.

Get out there and skate! Test your course rigorously to ensure it works properly.

www.hotdogmagazine.com

The best new releases and DVDs reviewed

The new movie magazine

HOT DOG

JANUARY 2001 £2.75

DRUGS IN MOVIES

Stars who crashed & burned
The making of Trainspotting
Hollywood dealers
Rave films: agony and Ecstasy

Jack Nicholson
The King – as you've never, ever seen him before

PENELOPE CRUZ AND THE SEXIEST EUROPEAN ACTRESSES

'We whacked this chicken with an axe...'
Withnail by Bruce Robinson

WIN! A luxury weekend in New York and a surround-sound system
PLUS Joe Pesci Schwarzenegger Nicolas Cage Pulp Fiction

The new movie magazine. On sale November 30

iFG

TOMB RAIDER CHRONICLES

£29.99 • Eidos • Out now

No stranger to posh birds, *Steve Hill* gets to grips with Lara Croft

So this is Christmas, and what have you got? Another *FIFA* game and another *Tomb Raider* game, obviously. Waaaidd-a-minute – wasn't the lovely Lara missing, presumed brown bread, at the end of the most recent game, the aptly-named *The Last Revelation*?

She certainly was, but that was never going to stop Eidos from claiming its Christmas bonus, and here she is again in all her glory. So has she risen from the dead in a Christ-like fashion? Or emerged from the shower having forgotten the previous year, Bobby Ewing style?

Not quite, as this is something of a history lesson, recounting not one but four of Lara's previous adventures. But don't worry, they haven't simply rehashed the old games – these adventures are secret ones that weren't documented in any of the previous four instalments.

So how do they come about? In an admirably contrived manner, as it goes. At a memorial service to commemorate the life of dearly departed Lara (whose body hasn't actually been found, sequel fans), her best friends begin openly weeping and drunkenly recounting their favourite Lara stories. Flashbacks kick in and before you can say "Lara Croft's Cruelty Zoo" you're thrown into an all-leaping, climbing, swimming, animal-shooting escapade, sporting nothing but safari pants, a skin-tight top and a huge pair of pistols.

SAME OLD, SAME OLD

Business as usual then, and indeed the first adventure is classic *Tomb Raider* stuff, depositing Lara in the back-streets of Rome in traditional garb with a hankering for ancient artefacts. New moves include the largely cosmetic tightrope walking, and the slightly more useful ability to swing from bars like an orang-utan. Fortunately, dogs can still be killed, and the story opens up via the traditional insertion of oversized keys into the relevant locks. It soon gets reasonably interesting, and if nothing else provides a swift reminder as to the series' merits.

Next up is a major step back in time, with a 16-year-old Lara paying a visit to a sinister Irish island populated by ghouls, demons and rambling priests. Her impromptu catapult aside, no weapons are used in this section, which has more in common with traditional adventure games in that it involves a lot of wandering around and the occasional combining of unlikely objects. It's a change of pace from the opener, but still a reasonably intriguing affair, providing you can come to terms with manipulating a teenage girl.

The third outing sees a fully-grown Lara in SAS-style camouflage outfit investigating a Russian U-boat base. Again, plenty of shooting and jumping, some reasonable set-pieces and a ludicrous selection of larger-than-life villains to contend with.

The final adventure sees another new costume, and it's probably the pick of the bunch. A skin-tight leather cat-suit with headset, the ensemble bears a freak resemblance to those worn in *The Matrix*, and indeed this section of the game has a similarly hi-tech feel, with Lara infiltrating a tower block aided by a typically annoying computer hacker.

SO WHAT?

Naturally, *Tomb Raider Chronicles* doesn't break the mould. It's varied enough for long-time fans of the series, and an ideal debut for newcomers. It's not *Deus Ex* by any means, but it isn't supposed to be. Of course, the PC can boast far better games than this, but it is also blighted by far worse. It would be easy to snobbishly dismiss it as a mere console game, but that would be denying yourself several hours of mindless fun. Not to mention staring at a posh bird's arse. PCZ

> "You're thrown into an all-action escapade, sporting nothing but safari pants, a skin-tight top and a huge pair of pistols"

IN PERSPECTIVE

Lara has starred in enough games to fill this section herself. If you've never played a *Tomb Raider*, it might be worth seeking out a cheap copy of any previous instalment.

- Tomb Raider
- Tomb Raider II
- Tomb Raider III
- Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation
- Tomb Raider Chronicles

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P300 Memory 64Mb of RAM
ALSO REQUIRES 16Mb 3D card
WE SAY That should just about do it

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Four separate adventures • Classic and refined gameplay • Level editor

DOWNERS Some ropey camera positioning • Haphazard combat • Almost wholly linear

72 A thoroughly enjoyable romp

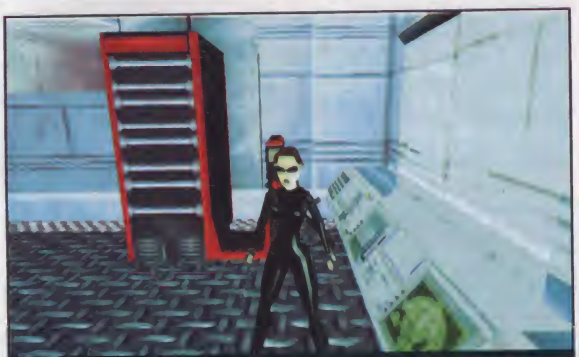
Nobody does it better. Lara in traditional tomb-raiding outfit.

Sweet 16 and never been kissed. A likely story.

She's not a little girl anymore.

"Chester City 1, Stevenage Borough 1. Hayes 3, Yeovil Town 2..."

Get in the way of that crane and she really will be dead.


Who's been watching *The Matrix*, then?

The putting system is the best we've ever seen.

So these are the improved graphics?

More pointless statistics from the world of *Links*.

If you can interpret the Powerstroke gauge, your name must be Lee Westwood or Colin Montgomerie.

Sergio whacks one towards the hotel where the Americans are staying.

There are six courses, with plenty of information and stats on each.

LINKS 2001

£29.99 • Microsoft • Out now

Keith Pullin spends another weekend indoors playing golf. When will this man find some friends?

Links 2001 is the most significant update in the history of the long-running *Links* series. Alas, only the most loyal of *Links* fans will actually notice any difference.

In general, this latest addition to the *Links* family is a poorly presented simulation, with an abundance of confusing menus, a very tricky control method, and a messy and uncommunicative online clubhouse. Still, with real cash up for grabs in a whole range of virtual tournaments, there's also plenty of incentive for you to try and win your money back if you do make the purchase.

IN PERSPECTIVE

Links 2001 is a good simulation requiring a lot of time and patience. But if you're after something that's realistic and fun *PGA 2000* is the one to plump for.

PGA Championship Golf 2000

Tiger Woods PGA Tour Golf 2000

Links LS2000

Links LS2001

PHYSICALLY IMPROVED?

The main areas of improvement in *Links 2001* are apparently centred on the digitised graphics and ball physics. However, actual evidence of this is sparse to say the least. Forget the reliability of *PGA Championship Golf*'s bouncing balls, in *Links 2001* expect your ball to end up about a mile away from where you last saw it before it disappeared out of view. Still, wayward balls aside, there is one very intriguing addition to the game – and she goes by the name of Annika Sorenstam.

Golf's female equivalent of Tiger Woods has been recruited, along with Sergio Garcia and Arnold Palmer, as one of *Links*' three digitised professionals. Microsoft, it seems, is attempting to lure females into the exciting world of computer golf. Frankly, the concept is laughable. If ever there was a non-existent demographic, this is it. It's like trying to get men to use tampons – there's really no need. Similarly (according to my girlfriend anyway), women couldn't give a toss about golf games. If they want to play golf they'll get out in the fresh air and play it for real. Let's face it – only males can truly understand the intoxicating pleasure of simulating something, in a room, by themselves.

> **"Microsoft is attempting to lure females into the exciting world of computer golf. Frankly, the concept is laughable"**

WHACKING OFF

One area of the game that should be praised is the putting. A coloured contour system reveals exactly how steep the burrows are, and in conjunction with that a slope indicator affixed to the mouse pointer shows what direction the slope is leaning.

When it comes to iron and wood shots, the tried-and-trusted tri-click method is by far the easiest way to play. However, for the truly courageous there's the mouse-wrenching Powerstroke. While this method remains totally indecipherable to the average Sunday hacker, golfing anoraks will lap it up. The amount of information you're given after each shot is almost overwhelming – everything from open or closed clubfaces to the speed of the clubhead on impact is covered. Never has there been a more precise way of hitting a PC golf ball; sadly, there's never been a more difficult one.

While there's no denying the fact that this is a well-rounded and complete golfing package, it has to be said that *Links 2001* offers nothing substantially different from *Links 2000* and comes nowhere near the instant accessibility or enjoyment of *PGA Championship Golf*. We suggest you think very carefully before buying because *Links 2001* is a serious golf game, with serious amounts of options, for serious golf fans with serious time on their hands. PCZ

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 233 Memory 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** PII 300, 64Mb RAM, 3D acceleration

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Great putting system • Appeals to women? • Loads of stats for anoraks • Six courses • Complimentary course designer

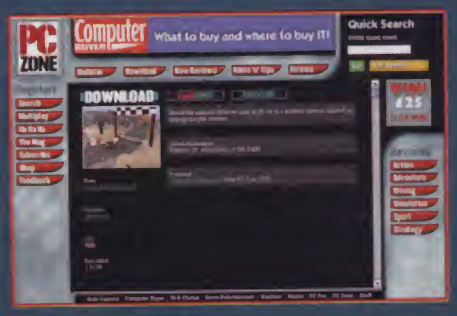
DOWNERS Misleading ball physics • Messy presentation • Powerstroke difficult to control

70 Progressive rather than impressive

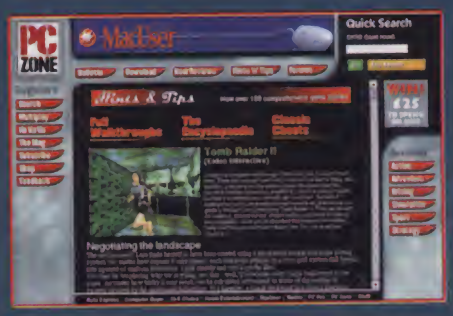
PC ZONE

www.pczone.co.uk

Reviews and ratings for 100s of top games

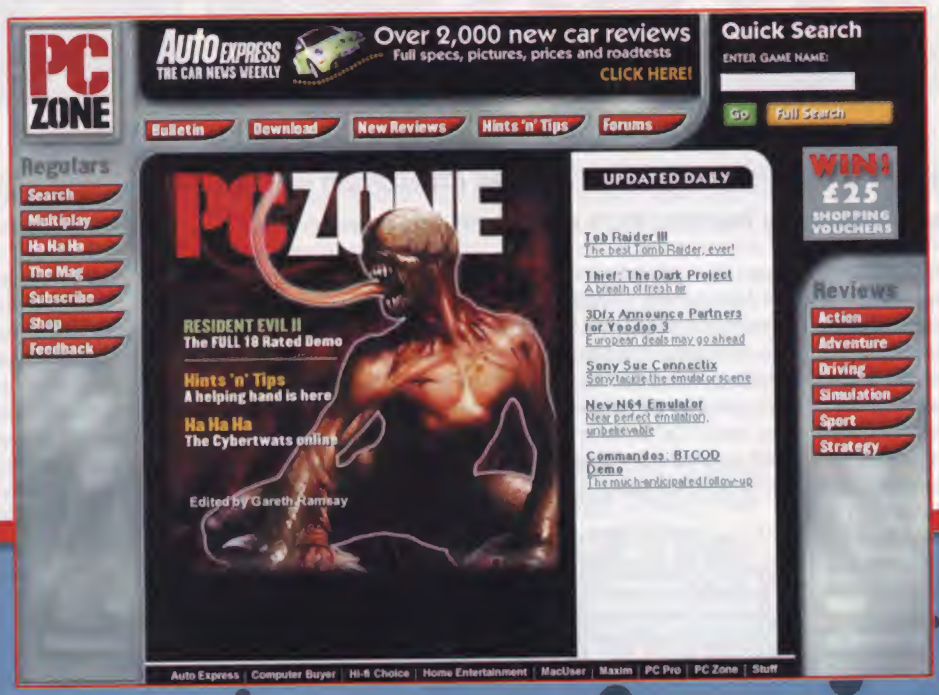


Download all the latest demos and patches



Hints and Tips to perfect your gaming technique

WARNING! Serious PC Games Zone



FEATURING

- Reviews
- Chat
- Multiplay
- Archives
- Hints and Tips
- Download
- News

UPDATED DAILY AT 3.30PM

Health Warning: The PC Zone web-site can feed your addiction to games

www.pczone.co.uk

Spain seems to be doing awfully well. Bloody losers...

Scotland's doing well – pity it's 0AD and Jesus is about to arrive.

Send in the cavalry – and the cannons and stuff.

So when was Mexico in the middle of Europe?

CALL TO POWER II

£34.99 • Activism • Out now

PC ZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

When *Andrew Wright* realised he'd been playing *Civilization* – or one of its descendants – for ten years, he suddenly became very coy about his age...

Believe it or not, *Civilization* first hit the streets a decade ago and the same game concept – in-depth research, resource and military management based on a board divided into squares – has made the transition from the 20th to the 21st century with surprisingly few real changes.

Yes, we've moved steadily from *Civilization* itself – which, incidentally, was a million-seller in its day – to the much-improved *Civilization II* and on to the third-generation *Call To Power*, complete with spiffing 3D(ish) graphics and clever AI. Now we have the fourth-generation version, with marginally spiffier graphics and much cleverer AI. The trouble is that many of the improvements are more or less invisible to the average intellect.

One of the obvious changes is that a city's influence over the surrounding landscape now depends on its population rather than a fixed two squares. In other words, big cities can spread over more than just 20 squares. This will be seen as a fundamental change to many die-hard *Civ* players, and it does impact on the game in that you can concentrate on your capital city and vital ports to the exclusion of the minor ones you wish you hadn't bothered to build. On the other hand, not many cities will ever get big enough to expand over more than 20 squares, so only real *Civ* anoraks will ever see it happen.

The borders between neighbouring races/states/peoples are clearly defined – as in *Alpha Centauri* – to reduce accidental skirmishes and the combat system has been completely overhauled. This solves one of my own criticisms of the original *Call To Power*, of course – the fact that a gang of rock-throwing, spear-chucking natives who hadn't even learned to ride a horse or write their name could actually take out a battalion of super-heavy 22nd-century hover tanks with a lucky hit or two. In *CTP II* you can now group units into armies and reorganise them at will – you can even name the armies for easy reference.

In *CTP II*, you move between ancient Rome and the 22nd century.

Happily, the developers have also tackled my other criticism as well – you can now add units, buildings and improvements to the build queue and move them up and down in terms of priority.

Another big change is that rather than just achieving victory by sheer military muscle, you can opt for victory by diplomatic means as well as scientific achievement. If you're the first to build a wonder of the world, you also get a big bonus.

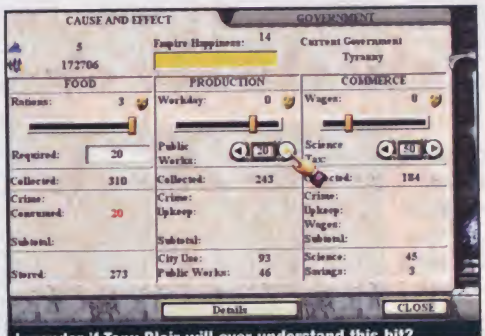
Diplomacy is much improved. For instance, you can come up with counter-proposals and compound proposals to thwart obnoxious or difficult neighbours, decide on a particular diplomatic attitude to take with individual rulers, and even make threats.

CTP II takes more than a few tips from Sid Meier's masterpiece *Alpha Centauri*, in that it now features intelligent advisors who'll pop up and tell you what you should be doing, a city summary screen for each city, 'mayors' who'll take over the menial task of running a city, as well as automated tile improvement. New features include a radar map that shows things such as borders and trade routes, trade income that depends on scarcity and distance rather than fixed values, as well as new units and

Poland just before the Germans invaded. Of course, I won't mention the war...

Call yourself an advisor? Well, OK, then.

Big choice there, but at least we can choose between them.


I wonder if Tony Blair will ever understand this bit?

Plenty of options for the prospective world ruler.

new maps, plus the expected scenario editor.

You can play against up to seven opponents in your struggle to advance and choose from any one of 41 races, from Australian to Korean, Polish or Thai. No, I don't know why there are 41 and not 40 or 42, but frankly it makes little difference what race you decide to play because all your actions are decided by you.

IN PERSPECTIVE

The original, *Civ II*, is still around on budget labels but the third-generation titles are better. Try *Alpha Centauri* if you're a sci-fi fan, or *Civilization II: Test Of Time* if you like the traditional approach.

Civilisation II Classic

Alpha Centauri

Civilisation II: Test Of Time

Call To Power II

Incidentally, for the sake of political correctness, you can be either a male or female ruler, but quite what difference it makes, I'm not sure. In other words, instead of being Mohandas Gandhi, you can be Indira Gandhi instead. And I always thought he was Mahatma or something. And instead of being George Washington you can be Susan B Anthony. You mean you don't know who she was? Me neither...

That said, the computer does try to simulate the character of the opposing sides as realistically as possible. In other words, the English behave like the expansionist thugs the Americans think we are – or were – while the Mongols kill people for fun and the Polynesians are laid-back almost to the point of being horizontal. And so would I be if I lived on an island paradise with lots of big-breasted women in grass skirts and more fish than I could sensibly handle. That's not a sexist comment, by the way – I really don't mind whether they're male or female fish...

CTP II does add to the multiplayer aspect of the *Civ* series by introducing play-by-e-mail and hot-seat options as well as the level of multiplayer support you'd expect these days, either over the Internet or across a network. As well as the complete scenario editor, you get a full world map and three fully-integrated historically-based scenarios. You can also choose from four different maps sizes, from small to absolutely-bloody-I-want-to-stay-up-all-night gigantic. Which is nice...

> **"*Call To Power II* doesn't break new ground, but part of the problem is that *Civilization* was already close to being a perfect game"**

Call To Power II really is a brilliant game but, despite the improvements, it doesn't really break much new ground. OK, so the diplomatic options are much improved. Enemies will survey the whole diplomatic scene before attacking or forming alliances or whatever. But you expected them to do that before, didn't you?

And do you care if the game has expanded to cover 6,300 years? No, of course not – you just wanted to win and didn't care what century you were in as long as you had better units than your opponents. Part of the problem faced by the game's designers is that *Civilization* was already close to being the perfect game for many people. It was challenging, absorbing and thoroughly addictive – and it still is. So what can you add without changing the way the game is played?

The answer, unfortunately, is very little. You can redesign the interface (successfully, I might add), alter one or two of the basic rules (just as successfully) and completely revamp the AI (equally successfully), but you can't change the fact that this is just another upgrade to one of the all-time classic games, *Civilization*. Oh, it's good and it's as bloody addictive as it ever was. It's also well worth buying, even for existing *CTP* owners but, in the end, it's essentially just a massive upgrade. No more, no less. PZ

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P166 Memory 32Mb **SUPPORTS** DirectX and compatible cards **WE SAY** At least a P233 or better with 32b of RAM, the more RAM the better

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Even more ways to win • More unique units • Great graphics • Improved combat

DOWNERS Slow to get going • Complicated interface

86 Not a ground-breaker, but still the best *Civ* clone

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE

£29.99 • Simon & Schuster • Out now

***Richie Shoemaker* finds himself transferred to the arse end of the *Star Trek* universe**

Here we go, another month, another *Star Trek* game – and one that on paper doesn't hold much promise.

PC ZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

Let's look at the evidence: the setting is, of course, the now-defunct *DS9* series, the *Star Trek* offshoot that is perhaps the weakest of the four, due to the fact that almost the entire first four seasons were set exclusively on *DS9* itself. As the basis for a game, you wouldn't think much was salvageable.

But then the series suddenly went from bad to brilliant, almost in one episode. Klingon Worf transferred over from *The Next Gen*'s Enterprise. The high-tech USS Defiant took to the stars, Ferengi wideboy Quark started selling 3D porn and all sorts of Dominion/Klingon/Federation tension kicked off. Best of all, whining Jake Sisko, son of the Station's commander, buggered off the Station.

At its core *The Fallen* comes from the *Tomb Raider* Academy of Game Design. You follow one of three of the series' cast (Sisko Sr, Worf or Kira) in third-person view, cavorting across chasms, finding less-than-elusive triggers that allow access to further levels, while along the way you get to vaporise evil-doers with Phasers, Gravitic Mines, Grenade Launchers and Pulse Cannons.

Unlike *Tomb Raider*, however, *The Fallen* has been designed from the outset as a PC game, and as such you control your character in the same manner as you would in a first-person shooter. The mouse controls the camera and the keyboard controls your movements and inventory, so there are no problems with the camera getting in the way of the action and obscuring your view of what might be going on around you. *The Fallen* may look like *Tomb Raider* in Star Fleet clothing, but it is a hell of a lot more than that.

"The way in which each race's motivations are revealed makes it all tick along at a perfect pace, with plenty of subterfuge"

PARALLEL UNIVERSE

For *Star Trek* fans at least, *The Fallen*'s big draw is its story. Set alongside the Millennium trilogy of *DS9* novels, the story is concerned with finding three red orbs. The Cardassians want them to build some mad weapon, the Cult of the Pah-Wraiths want them to fulfil an ancient prophecy and the Federation have been dragged in because it's all kicking off on Deep Space Nine.

OK, so the story maybe doesn't sound all that promising, but it's the way in which each race's motivations are revealed that makes it all tick along at a perfect pace, bringing in plenty of mystery and subterfuge along the way.

Being able to play the game as one of three of *DS9*'s main characters helps the storyline no end as well. Rather than give you the same levels to play through, each character's story runs parallel with the others.

For instance, playing the game as Sisko you are beamed aboard a stranded Federation vessel to rescue the stricken crew. As you materialise, an alien ship arrives and attacks the Defiant. If you play as Worf your first mission is

IN PERSPECTIVE

In terms of storyline and its lengthy single-player game, *Fallen* is perhaps better than *Voyager*. If you want pure action however, stick with *Voyager*.

Star Trek: Voyager – Elite Force

Star Trek: DS9 – The Fallen

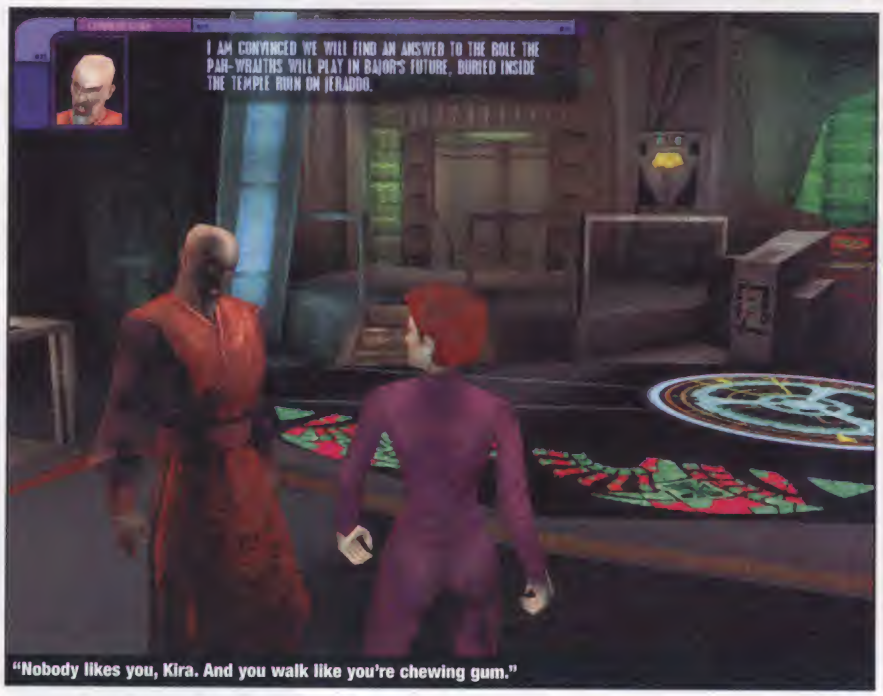
Star Trek: TNG – Hidden Evil

Tomb Raider Chronicles

"Maybe it would have been easier if we had opened the window."

Another civilian beams over to Sick Bay.

Worf always knew he should get out more.



"Nobody likes you, Kira. And you walk like you're chewing gum."

THE FALLEN

Oh look, someone's left a fuel drum right next to that alien bad guy.

There is a first-person mode, but you can't move or shoot while in it.

Use your Tricorder to search for hidden areas.

"Oh, you so fine baby. Uuugh."

CREW CUTS

As in *Star Trek: Voyager – Elite Force*, in *The Fallen* you will have time inbetween missions where you can stroll around the Station, talking to other members of the cast. Some may not have vital information, but all are entertaining

Garak is the Cardassian tailor on the station and is always good for a bit of wit and wisdom.

Odo, DS9's dull but dependable shapeshifting security chief, suspects the worst in everyone.

Chief O'Brien is DS9's answer to Scotty and twice as annoying.

If you need anything illicit, or explicit, Quark's your man, or rather your Ferengi.

Science Officer Jadzia Dax is a freckly old ladyman.

Doctor Bashir doesn't get involved too often, but then he never did.

set on the Defiant as the same bio-organic aliens beam aboard, so as you run around finding access cards to shut out the marauding menace, Sisko is doing the same nearby. Occasionally the characters meet up, usually aboard Deep Space Nine itself, and swap stories. If you've been playing as Kira, you can start again as Worf and reach the same point in the storyline, learning that little bit more about the mystery. It's clever stuff, and very entertaining.

More than any other *Star Trek* game to date, *The Fallen* has bags of atmosphere. In fact, more than any other *Star Trek* game, film or TV show, *The Fallen* manages to conjure up a sense of fear and foreboding. It's not quite up to the level set by *System Shock 2*, of course, but there are a handful of times when an alien might cause you to leap out of your skin, helped by the dark levels and brooding and uncharacteristically tense soundtrack.

ACTION STATIONS

Though the adventuring side of the game is little more than a series of keycard-searching set-pieces, the developer has at least added a few puzzles that make use of standard-issue Federation equipment.

Tricorders, for instance, are pretty handy at locating secret switches and hostile enemies that may be lurking in the next room. More than that though, they are essential if you want to avoid hand-to-hand combat. One alien you meet early on carries a Borg-like personal energy shield, which you have to scan to get its frequency so you can adjust your phaser setting to shoot through it. You may have more powerful weapons in your arsenal, but only a trusty phaser in combination with your tricorder will get you past the the Grigari hordes. Another nice touch.

The Fallen is not without its problems though. Without a decent 3D card (Voodoo 3 or GeForce), many of the models and textures lack definition. Additionally, the game can become repetitive – thanks in part to a clutch of enemies that although not stupid, are very predictable. Cardassians, Grigari and all the other alien scum of the universe all typically fire on sight rather than sound, rushing towards you in order that they may die in full view.

On some levels the enemies are placed in such a way that firing into a nearby fuel canister will neatly kill them. You might not see that as much of a problem, but believe me, in the 24th century fuel drums are left everywhere – kinda careless, you have to agree.

That aside, *The Fallen* is a highly entertaining game and is in many ways comparable to *Voyager – Elite Force* in that it offers a great storyline, within a game that plays to *Star Trek*'s strengths as a TV series.

Against *Voyager*, although there are no multiplayer options, *The Fallen* at least offers more than two days of single-player fun. It's atmospheric, involving, good-looking and above all addictive. *Star Trek* fans especially will love it, *Tomb Raider* fans may even prefer it. PCZ

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** PII-233 **Memory** 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 3D card, TNT or equivalent **WE SAY** Fine but chuggy. A PII-300 and a better 3D card will help no end

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Play as three characters through a very entertaining story • Intuitive control system • Atmospheric and addictive gameplay

DOWNERS Simple AI • Story can become confusing and the action repetitive • Not all the voice-overs are from the *real* actors

82 **Another great *Star Trek* game? Illogical**

NO ONE LIVES FOREVER

£34.99 • Fox Interactive • Out now

And some games just don't live at all. *Dave Woods* is feeling blue

Most of the time, reviewing games is fairly straightforward. You spend a few days playing through endless levels, hitting goblins on the head, shooting grown men in the face or scoring top-corner goals from the edge of the area. Then you try to gauge how much you've enjoyed the experience, and how the game stands in relation to others in the genre. But (and you just knew there had to be a but), every now and again a game comes along and takes a dump on this carefully crafted equation.

NOLF is one such game. I had high(ish) hopes for it because: a) it comes from developer Monolith and I liked *Blood 2* and *Shogo* even though the AI was awfully iffy; b) it's the first game to use the brand-new LithTech 2.5 engine; and c) it's built around a cool female superspy with access to the latest gadgets and missions that span the globe.

So I spent ages willing the game to be better than slightly good and kept thinking that if I gave it a fair crack it would suddenly transform itself into a classic. But no. Like all the other Monolith games I could mention, it's not dire and there's a certain amount of retro-pleasure in the 'keep finger pressed alternately between forwards and backwards while shooting at anything that moves' action. But ultimately, that's all you're going to get.

Despite the inclusion of a few sub-games scattered about, the game is more linear than a one-way street and the AI is bordering on abysmal. To try to hide this, Monolith has coded in a number of routines, so when you shoot or attract a guard's attention he might somersault or run to the nearest pillar. However, a few seconds later he's back out and standing still while you shoot him. That isn't going to fool anyone, especially when two or more guards run towards you on exactly the same path. To eliminate them you just keep shooting at the same point.

> **"Despite the inclusion of a few sub-games, it's more linear than a one-way street and the AI is bordering on the abysmal"**

The LithTech engine looks pretty good, and the character models (they've included a bit of variety since the demo) are detailed and move around fairly realistically. A word of warning though, you're going to need a hefty system if you want all the effects and details. Monolith recommends a PIII-500, and it's not joking. We tried it out on a 450 and it chugged like a bastard.

It's also nowhere near the level of id's *Quake III* beauty. Remember, we've seen *Return to Castle Wolfenstein* running and have seen how far the stakes have been raised. In comparison, *NOLF* looks old.

And it is a shame because some of the ideas are really good. Struggle through the dull opening levels and you move to Germany, where the action is faintly reminiscent of *Counter-Strike*. Further on, the action gets a lot more varied, but why struggle for a day just to reach something worthy of your attention?

In its favour, it's a long game to play through, although you will probably feel a bit jaded before the finale. However, the notion that you can play the game as a shooter or a thinker is so far off the mark it's laughable. Sneaking around is next to impossible – after about 30 seconds on each level I was spotted and the game reverted to move and shoot, move and shoot.

To finish on a bright note, the array of weapons is excellent, and some of the gadgets you've got access to add another slight dimension to the linearity. Overall, though, I can't recommend it as a worthy buy with *Gunman Chronicles* on release at the same time. PCZ

IN PERSPECTIVE

Metal Gear Solid and *Project IGI* are better at sneaking about, while *Gunman* and *Psycho Circus* are better shooters.

- Metal Gear Solid
- Project IGI
- Gunman Chronicles
- Kiss Psycho Circus
- No One Lives Forever

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 250 Memory 64Mb **ALSO REQUIRES** 3D card **WE SAY** A PIII-500 is OK, but this baby really needs a PIII-733 and a 32Mb 3D card to get the most out of the engine

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Long single-player game • Decent weapons

DOWNERS Poor AI • Far too linear • Need a hefty PC

69 More *Casino Royale* than *GoldenEye*

Outdoors the LithTech engine is more than capable.

Stick with it and it does get better.

An old-skool shooter in more ways than one.

Nice weapons baby. Yeah!

Intelligence that's less than artificial.

BLAIR WITCH VOLUME 2: COFFIN ROCK

£19.99 • Take 2 Interactive • Out now

***Keith Pullin* goes on a witch hunt**

So, another *Blair Witch* horror/adventure reaches our PCs, and with one still to come, it has to be said that things are already beginning to get a little stale.

Coffin Rock is not a bad game, though. The omnipresent puzzle solving of the first one has been toned down somewhat, in favour of a more swashbuckling approach. So, instead of merely snuffling about looking for clues, you're pretty much required to shoot or slash just about anything that moves.

This fairly linear slant is not to the detriment of the plot though, and in true *Blair Witch* fashion there are surprises aplenty…

FLASHBACKS

One of the most innovative elements to the story is the series of flashbacks our main hero, Lazarus, keeps having. These come in the form of vague memories he has of being a soldier during the American Civil War. The theory is that by playing through them, you get to find out how Lazarus ended up in the Burkitsville woods in the first place.

However, despite its fast-action approach, *Coffin Rock* doesn't always flow. Numerous cut-scenes with painfully long dialogues insist on breaking up the momentum just as things start to hot up. More worryingly, the cut-scenes seem to happen at highly inappropriate times. Why, for example, would Lazarus have a flashback to running around the forest shooting soldiers at the precise moment he meets with what appears to be the Blair Witch? A quick *déjà vu* to a particularly nasty boozed-up one-night-stand would possibly work. But shooting soldiers? Definitely not.

"The mood is permanently eerie. *Exorcist*-type voices swirl through Lazarus' head, the background sounds are taken straight from the film, the graphics are fantastic"

When you do manage to get into the thick of it, you'll find this is not an easy game, either. The Civil War section throws hordes of soldiers at you, and while they're not necessarily experts in figuring out when they're outnumbered, they're fairly quick with the trigger finger. Other formidable enemies include Twig Monsters as well as Devil Dogs and an army of ghosts from Lazarus' mysterious past.

VOICES FROM THE GRAVE

When it comes to atmosphere, *Coffin Rock* doesn't fail. The mood is permanently eerie. Evil *Exorcist* type voices swirl through Lazarus' head, and the background sounds are (like *Rustin Parr*) taken directly from the original film. The graphics in *Coffin Rock* are also fantastic – in fact, they're probably even better than the aforementioned *Parr*.

That said, the overall tension doesn't quite reach the level of the first game. Maybe that's because developer Human Head hasn't quite got the same mastery of the *Nocturne* engine as the original *Nocturne* developer Terminal Reality. Then again, maybe it's because we're just a little tired of the whole *Blair Witch* thing.

Whatever the reason, the fact remains that while fun, engaging and cheap, *Coffin Rock* offers very little that you wouldn't have already experienced in either *Nocturne* or *Rustin Parr*. PCZ

At last – the one you've been waiting for… the Blair Witch.

This is no time to walk off into the sunset, matey.

As usual, there's a lot of freaky stuff lying about.

Your men possess limited AI and cannot be controlled.

The return of the pesky Twig Monster.

IN PERSPECTIVE

Coffin Rock doesn't quite reach the spooky standards of *Rustin Parr*, but is still an atmospheric and playable action/adventure nonetheless.

- Blair Witch Vol 1: Rustin Parr
- Nocturne
- Resident Evil 3: Nemesis
- Alone In The Dark Trilogy
- Blair Witch Vol 2: Coffin Rock

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** PII 350 **Memory** 64Mb RAM, 850Mb HD space
WE SAY PIII 500 with 128Mb RAM and hardware acceleration

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Quite atmospheric • Interesting plot • Affordable price

DOWNERS Too many cut-scenes • Quite short • Lengthy dialogue

68 Groany Blair

SCREAMER 4X4

£34.99 • Virgin Interactive • Out now

Four times four is 16. *Steve Hill* finally puts his maths degree to some use

Idea for game: drive a Land Rover slowly around some mountains in the rain at night. As pitches go, it's not quite *Monkey Tennis*, but neither is it a concept guaranteed to send gamers into paroxysms of unfettered joy. Unless, of course, they like Land Rovers or are Welsh (scarcely mutually exclusive characteristics).

The idea somehow managed to get through though, and essentially, *Screamer 4x4* recreates the experiences of a sheep farmer, albeit with a slightly competitive edge… and no sheep. What it doesn't do is have any connection whatsoever with the original *Screamer*, an ancient arcade-style racer of some repute. From a completely different developer, the wholly inappropriate use of the *Screamer* name is simply a fairly desperate attempt by Virgin to draw attention to what is an almost unmarketable game.

That's not to say it's unplayable, it's just that the concept will inevitably fly over the heads of gamers drunk on futuristic racers and inner city carnage. *Midtown Madness* this isn't. What it is, however, is a change of pace. In a market flooded by identikit driving games, it's commendably different, if not exactly a laugh-a-minute madcap escapade.

JUNIOR KICKSTART

Here's how it works. Taking the wheel of an off-road vehicle, treacherous terrain must be negotiated as you find your to way to a number of checkpoints. Minor penalties are incurred for clipping them, a major penalty is incurred for capsizing your buggy, and killing a spectator results in instant disqualification. To all intents and purposes, it's a four-wheel version of *Kick Start*, thankfully without the perennially chirpy Peter Purves.

Once penalties have been added, the quickest driver between start and finish scoops the points. You never actually see any of the other drivers; they simply appear on the scoreboard at the end of each section. It's a solitary experience to say the least, the only human contact coming with the occasional clump of static spectators that gather near some of the more tricky checkpoints. The tits.

SIM BUGGY

Clearly with all four wheels firmly planted in the simulation camp, *Screamer 4x4* achieves its aims comfortably. Negotiating sheer rock faces can be tricky, and on some of the more erratic sections simply keeping your buggy upright is something of a challenge. It's certainly not a game for speed freaks, however – indeed, the slightest dab on the accelerator often results in a plea for caution from your otherwise mute co-driver.

Some concession to arcade action has been made with the inclusion of multiplayer modes, such as King Of The Hill, which can also be played with computer opponents. It's the solo off-road action that the game will be judged by though, and in fairness the sturdy Land Rover is supplemented by an array of jeeps – Cherokees and Mitsubishi Shoguns. Some of the sections even take place in daylight.

As an exercise in careful driving in difficult conditions, *Screamer 4x4* is arguably a benchmark title. As a compelling gaming experience, it's some way behind the field.

> **"With all four wheels in the sim camp, *Screamer* achieves its aims comfortably. But it's not a game for speed freaks"**

IN PERSPECTIVE

Off-road games seem to be making something of a resurgence at the moment, with *Screamer 4x4* now nestling at the simulation end of the market, *Insane* waving the arcade flag, and *Evolution* somewhere in between.

Screamer 4x4

Insane

4x4 Evolution

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P200 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 4Mb 3D card **WE SAY** Wicked lies. P500, 64Mb RAM, 16Mb 3D card

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Different • Fairly authentic

DOWNERS Not that thrilling • Graphical pop-up

61 Sim Land Rover

Brookside's resident Land Rover driver, Max Farnham, attempts an unlikely getaway.

The King Of The Hill mode allows you take out your frustrations on Subaru drivers.

They're easily pleased in Wales (and they also bear a freak resemblance to each other).

This game won't win any prizes for screenshots, but that's how it looks.

A dash for the finish line is about the only time you get to put your foot down.

A Destruction Derby mode offers more traditional action, either online or against bots.

fantastic games

100% FREE

freeloader.com

That got him right in the ball.

A combination move in the game they're all calling *MoHo*.

MOHO

£19.99 • Take 2 • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P266 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 8Mb 3D accelerator card **WE SAY** The usual nonsense. Double everything for a closer estimation

When three former Bullfrog employees broke away to set up Lost Toys, much was expected of the newly-formed developer's debut title. What people didn't expect was a cod-futuristic affair combining elements of *Robot Wars*, *Marble Madness* and *American Gladiators*.

A mixed bag admittedly, and not one that sits easily among the myriad of quality titles available for the PC. Faced with a raft of cinematic epics, engrossing strategic challenges, and even goblin-ridden quests, a game that involves controlling a synthetic being that has been replaced from the waist down by an oversized ball bearing is going to be top of very few shopping lists. That's the crux of *MoHo* though, and game modes include races, king of the hill, last man rolling, running the gauntlet and powerball, whereby the titular sphere is launched at a pole in order to score points.

Success at each event is largely based on using forward momentum to your advantage, and randomly pressing buttons to instigate a combination move, thus dispatching your opponents in a beat-'em-up fashion. Further challenges become available as progress is made, although they all essentially revolve around the same basic gameplay elements. *MoHo* certainly isn't unplayable, but there are so many more interesting things you could be doing, and the novelty is all too brief.

In its favour, it does look reasonable but, these days, that's the equivalent of commending a television programme because it's in colour. The game is only £20, but it's still difficult to see how Lost Toys thought anyone would be remotely interested in this type of thing.

Steve Hill

PCZ VERDICT 32%

The Spectrum rugby league management sim was better.

Andy Farrell would be ashamed to have his face associated with this.

CHAMPIONSHIP RUGBY MANAGER

£29.99 • Midas • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P133 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** A faster machine if you want anything to happen, although we guarantee it won't be too exciting when it does

After a disastrous World Cup, with weak attendance and poor displays by everyone bar the Australians and New Zealanders, the last thing rugby league needed was a substandard computer game to drag its name even further through the mud. With *Championship Rugby Manager*, it's as if 15 years of football management games never happened. The developers have decided to ignore all the trials and errors that have honed the *Championship Manager* series and any other decent management game and created a catalogue of errors with statistics, stupidly high basketball scores and one of the worst interfaces we've ever come across. To top it all off there is only the English league included. If this was a footy management sim we wouldn't even dignify it with a second glance. As it is, we must rue yet another wasted opportunity and conclude that only rugby league fans who've never played computer games in their lives could get any enjoyment out of this.

Mark Hill

PCZ VERDICT 25%

SUPERCROSS KINGS

Free • www.freeloader.com • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** PII-300 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** PII-450 with 64Mb RAM

Any games that come free are old, shit or pirated and while Freeloader.com has its fair share of golden oldies, it has an equal amount of modern mouldies too.

Supercross Kings is something of a stinker. If you live for motocross games, downloading the 10Mb setup files and five additional 3Mb tracks is probably a waste. Graphically *Supercross Kings* is passable, but the noises are obviously looped and the physics engine and AI are both pretty basic, to put it mildly.

But with six bikes to straddle, six tracks to race them over and a Championship race mode where you upgrade your beast after each race, *Supercross Kings* is a valid enough title for those who don't know any better and couldn't care less what they race.

Richie Shoemaker

PCZ VERDICT 43%

The first couple of tracks are quite good.

Don't worry, we were in pole position within seconds.

MTV Skateboarding has been skated off the park by its main rival.

MTV SKATEBOARDING

£29.99 • THQ • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P233 **Memory** 32Mb **ALSO REQUIRES** 3D card **SUPPORTS** Most game pads **WE SAY** Slow even with a P500, 320Mb RAM and a TNT2!

Typical. We wait years for a PC skateboarding game, then two arrive at once. Unfortunately, *MTV Skateboarding* is the runt of the litter, when held up next to the fabulous *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2* (see review on page 80). Despite a rip-roaring soundtrack and some fine graphics, *MTV Skateboarding* is held back by slow movement and sluggish controls. It doesn't have the 'feel' or the speed to match up to the might of Activision's skatefest, in spite of an almost identical control system.

MTV Skateboarding does have Stunt mode (which allows you to jump one-off ramps), MTV Hunt mode (collect MTV logos to prolong time) and Survival mode (gain additional time by pulling tricks) – but it doesn't have the same addictive qualities as its rival and comes out second best. For completists only.

Paul Mallinson

PCZVERDICT 50%

DIRT TRACK RACING & DTR: SPRINT CARS

£29.99 • Take 2 • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P233 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** P400, 64Mb of RAM, 3D card

Two for the price of one from Take 2, which should be no reflection on the quality of these games, generously provided for our review in their actual boxes.

The first does what it says on the box, providing mud-based racing in an anti-clockwise fashion, with only the occasional figure of eight track deviating from the oval trend. Its *Sprint Cars* cousin does much the same thing, supplanting the road cars of the original with custom-made buggies.

Cheap and cheerful these games may be, but they're certainly far from unplayable, and there are worse driving games available. A lot of left turns are involved, but there is a modicum of perverse pleasure in grinding out a career, picking up sponsorship and attempting to reach the upper echelons of redneck racing.

Steve Hill

PCZVERDICT 52%

The game they're all calling *Dirt Track Racing*.

You don't get many games as colourful as this.

FUR FIGHTERS

£29.99 • Acclaim • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** PII-300 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** P450 with 64Mb RAM plus 3D card, at least

With less controversial games receiving bad publicity and the threat of expulsion from the nation's shelves, *Fur Fighters* on Dreamcast seems to have crept past the public eye without a second glance, largely due to the fact that it involves mass destruction of some fairly lovable animals, it maintained a cute and cuddly style throughout and though it looks like one for the kids, looks can be deceiving.

Fur Fighters is a fairly enjoyable mixture of simple puzzles and third-person shooting, where you control six fluffy animals in an attempt to save the eponymous Fighters' babies who have been kidnapped by the evil General Viggo. Plenty of shooting and leaping about are the staple diet here, but there are also side tasks to enjoy, such as playing basketball or even controlling a space shuttle and switching between the different characters certainly adds variety, as you combine their different skills to rescue babies and complete the level.

Quirky references are frequently added to the plot and, while the dialogue isn't side-splitting, it's hard to hold back a chuckle every now and then. There are also some extremely satisfying weapons – most of which can be acquired early on in the game – such as the rocket launcher which manages to throw Naughty Bears 20ft in the air, something which we found faintly amusing.

However, despite the excellent ideas, there are some faults within. Firstly the camera often finds itself in some awkward positions, not helped when you lose your crosshair among the bright landscapes and characters. The engine itself does the job, but it's clear that this game is far better suited to a console. Plus the scenery is more of a backdrop than an interactive environment. Despite these faults *Fur Fighters* is an entertaining game, and although the puzzles aren't too taxing, they are different enough to keep plodding along without you feeling that you've wasted your cash.

Apart from a few new babies to discover and new Fluff(death)Match levels this is basically the same as it was on the Dreamcast version, but this isn't a bad thing as it happens. On PC, *Fur Fighters* is fairly original, if undemanding. You could do a hell of a lot worse.

Elliott Hunt

PCZVERDICT 66%

FluffMatch is fun. For a while anyway.

Fur Fighters shows off its Dreamcast roots.

MOTOCROSS MANIA

£29.99 • Take 2 • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P266 **Memory** 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 4Mb 3D card **WE SAY** Double everything

Sound familiar? Look familiar, even? The latest in a growing trend of tribute games, *Motocross Mania* is clearly a fairly blatant copy of *Microsoft's Motocross Madness*, right down to the mental illness-related title (soon to be followed by *Motocross Psychosis* and *Motocross Schizophrenia*).

Fans of the genre may remember a game of minor repute that we reviewed more than a year ago, namely *Edgar Torrenteras' Extreme Biker*. The young Spanish daredevil's endorsement failed to excite the general public, and it largely disappeared without trace. From the same developer – Deibus Studios – *Motocross Mania* is essentially the same game but with a year's additional work and some new tracks. The major difference is the removal of the gimmicky ideas of the former – such as riding over aircraft – in favour of more orthodox racing.

Four different event types are included, namely traditional Motocross, stadium-based Supercross, off-road Baja and a Freestyle stunt section. Exactly like *Motocross Madness* then. Employing a slightly more arcadey riding model than its 'inspiration', *Mania* is certainly playable and there are enough tracks and events to keep the enthusiast busy. It's by no means a simulation, and some unlikely landings can be made, although there is still opportunity for being tossed around like the proverbial rag doll.

With the detail cranked up (you'll need a decent machine) it certainly looks the part, although the throaty roar of motocross hasn't been fully captured, coming across more like a kazoo orchestra. While it's a perfectly adequate game and good fun to boot, the major problem it has is that *Motocross Madness 1* and *2* are slightly better. For maniacs only.

Richie Shoemaker

PCZ VERDICT 71%

A bit of purchase can cause the front wheel to lift.

A good start is required in *Supercross* – unlike this one.

If you look closely, number 20 appears to be named after the developer.

A rare exciting moment from *Thandor: The Invasion*.

THANDOR: THE INVASION

£29.99 • JoWood • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII-233 **Memory** 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 16Mb 3D card **WE SAY** On a PIII-600 and Voodoo 5 system it still wasn't perfect

You never realise how important sound is to a game until you play one whose aural emissions are truly dreadful, and the noise that pours forth during *Thandor* is so bad that playing without sound is essential if you don't want to snap your CD in half.

As for other aspects of the game, the sci-fi story line was evidently so appalling that it has been omitted entirely from the manual, meaning that the soulless advance through the snow, grass, desert or lava-based levels is as interesting as watching paint dry.

With 64 different units to play with, however, there is at least something to keep paintwatchers interested, and the campaigns are helped by cooperative play – if you can find someone else with a copy of the game. Unless you're an RTS completist, may we suggest pissing money up the wall as a healthier investment.

Richie Shoemaker

PCZ VERDICT 24%

KAWASAKI ATV POWERSPORTS

£24.99 • Contact Sales • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P200 **Memory** 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 32Mb 3D card **WE SAY** Who cares, it's rubbish

PCZONE PANTS

"Get ready to rip it up!" is printed proudly on the back of the box, which is exactly what you will be doing to it if you decide to invest in its contents. Harsh, yes, but entirely fair. Quad racing isn't particularly explored in-depth by racing games, but if they play this bad, it's no wonder.

So where to start? The non-existent physics? Poor handling? Dodgy collision detection? How about the supposedly "stunning 3D environments"?

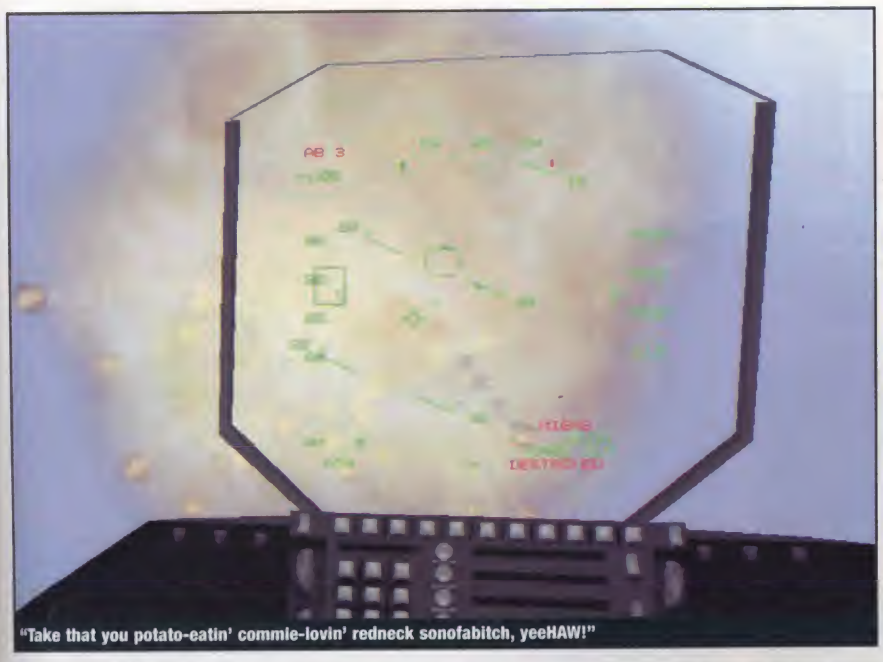
Well, let's start at the end and simply sum up that this is a terrifically awful attempt at entertainment, little better than some of the old £1.99 budget games that came out on the Spectrum more than 15 years ago.

The worst racing game since *Test Drive 6* – and you can stick that on the box for free.

Elliott Hunt

PCZ VERDICT 15%

Whoah, *Kawasaki ATV Powersports* is cooking now!


"Take that you potato-eatin' commie-lovin' redneck sonofabitch, yeeHAW!"

The game comes on two CDs, one for high-res scenery. Apparently.

JETFIGHTER IV: FORTRESS AMERICA

£29.99 • Take 2 • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** PII-333 **Memory** 48Mb RAM **SUPPORTS** Joystick **WE SAY** Fine, but we had problems getting the game to work on higher spec machines.

It's not often we dislike a game within ten seconds of playing it, but *JetFighter IV* is a definite contender. The game kicks off by informing you that America is the only Super Power in the world and the bastion of the United Nations. OK, so that's not too far from the truth, but you don't want to be told that by some trailer-park trash game title.

But those dastardly Commies, Pinkos and other enemies of Uncle Sam are trying to topple its position, and after playing this game I'm tempted to join them.

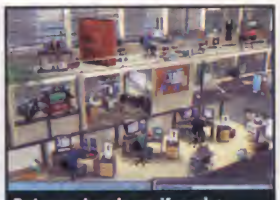
To say that this game is Christmas poo is an insult to Mr Hanky. The game doesn't try to pitch itself as a real flight sim, which is just as well as you can pull turns at 12G and still keep your head on your shoulders. The manual does say: "You don't need any knowledge about flight simulation," although we suspect that this rule also applied to whoever wrote the manual; their description of most of the air-to-air combat manoeuvres is just plain wrong.

The graphics look like they've been dragged kicking and screaming from 1997. Firing the machine guns looks more like you've got Luke Skywalker's light sabre stuck on your canopy; the landscape has obvious joins and if that wasn't bad enough the two halves are different colours, as if the games artist was either blind in one eye, or Laurence Llewellyn-Bowen.

They've even managed to make the engines sound more like a Hoover on the blink. If you're a teenage American Republican with a penchant for hand guns, the Stars and Stripes on your bedroom wall and the IQ of a rubber plant then you might like *JetFighter IV*. But if you like flying computer-generated aeroplanes, you might not.

Dan Emery

PCZ VERDICT 21%


Put your hands up if you're doing any work.

CITY TRADER

£19.99 • Monte Cristo • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P166 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** That's fine

As coma inducing as it sounds, *City Trader* isn't nearly as bad is you may think. Unlike some of the duller management sims out there (*Business Tycoon* to name just one), it's hugely detailed and actually quite entertaining.

If you haven't already guessed, the idea is to buy and sell shares, making as much money along the way as possible. Monitoring the market can be done in a wide variety of ways, ranging from simply listening to news reports to hiring spies to steal vital stock market information. You also have to employ staff to help you run things, all of whom have their own strengths and weaknesses.

There are seven relatively varied scenarios and, if you're really into this type of thing, you can play either online or over a network against your mates. If you've always fancied yourself as a bit of a stock broker, then *City Trader* provides an entertaining opportunity for you to have a go at making millions, without risking your mortgage in the process.

Martin Korda

PCZ VERDICT 61%

HOGS OF WAR

£29.99 • Infogrames • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** PII-266 **Memory** 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 500Mb Hard disk space, 8Mb Direct3D-compatible 3D card **WE SAY** If a PlayStation game needs those kind of specs you know you're in trouble

Idea for game: take the familiar turn-based gameplay of *Worms*, swap the worms for pigs, add a WWI-theme and set the whole lot within a 3D engine. Excellent. A winner. Sit back and watch the money roll in.

Well, maybe not. The great thing about *Worms* was, although graphically it was never anything special, it worked perfectly. It had charm, was easy to learn and difficult to master and required luck and skill. Most of all it was the greatest multiplayer game ever devised.

By comparison *Hogs Of War* is pig-ugly, has no charm (even Rik Mayall's vocal talents are wasted) and is piss-easy to learn and master. As a single-player game it at least offers a themed campaign game and RPG-elements as your porkers graduate through the missions, but as a multiplayer game it's too fiddly to control for people to keep swapping their seats to take turns. Oink.

Richie Shoemaker

PCZ VERDICT 47%

In true *Worms* fashion, when you die you leave your boots behind.

Truly a game as bleak as the landscapes it's set across.

BUDGET ZONE

If you live on baked beans, have an old PC or you're just hopelessly nostalgic, then you've come to the right place

WORDS Martin Korda (Heretic II – Dave Woods)

JIMMY WHITE'S 2 CUEBALL

BEST BUY

£9.99 • Sold Out • Out now

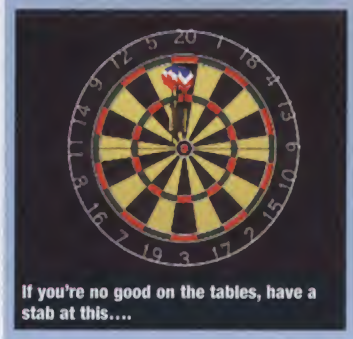
A somewhat surprising winner of this month's Best Buy award, considering the big-name games that surround it. However, *JW2 Cueball* just about shades it, because not only is it a spot-on snooker game, it's actually fun. The sport that boasts some of the most uncharismatic personalities in the world ever has somehow not only managed to capture the imagination of the viewing public, but the software industry, too.

Snooker's not the only game on offer, either. If you don't fancy all that endless positional play, you can always have a go at sinking a few balls on the pool table – using UK, US eight-ball or US nine-ball rules. The physics are bang on, and the difficulty levels will cater for anyone, whether you're a pro or the kind of nonce who calls a cue 'a bat'.

But wait – there's more. Rubbish at snooker? Think pool is something you go swimming in? Fear not, as there's darts and a draughts game, too. They're not as much fun as the other two, but work as a perfect foil if you need to take a break between shots. Finally, if you've always fancied a bash at some trick shots but you're worried everyone down the pub will take the piss when you inevitably chip the cue ball off the table, you can now practise show pieces from the comfort of your own PC. In fact, get some beers in and you need never go to another pub again.

PCZ VERDICT 81%

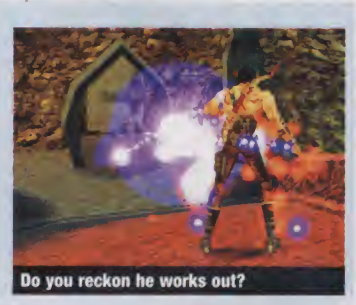
When you lack skill, there's only one thing to do. Blast it.



If you're no good on the tables, have a stab at this....

... and if you're rubbish at darts, try draughts instead.

Now let that be a lesson to you.



Do you reckon he works out?

HERETIC II

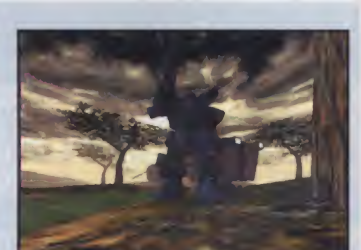
£9.99 • Focus • Out now

Raven Software has an excellent history for taking id's 3D engines, adding its own little enhancements and creating fab and groovy games. Just recently it broke from its fantasy heritage to deliver the unflappably violent *Soldier Of Fortune* and the best *Star Trek* licence in *Elite Force*.

Heretic II is a throwback from the days of good old beardy-weirdy nonsense. Surprisingly, it takes the *Quake II* engine and makes an excellent third-person action adventure out of it. It's atmospheric, the effects are superb and the action hasn't actually dated since we reviewed the original. It could do with being longer, but while it lasts it's probably one of the most enjoyable romps you can buy on the PC, and still better than a lot of the full-price releases you get fobbed off with. At this price it deserves more than a second look.

PCZ VERDICT 81%

The boy scouts scarpered after they spotted a giant robot.



Get inside, Billy, or you'll catch a cold

HEAVY GEAR 2

£9.99 • Focus • Out now

As seen with last month's *Gunlock*, games involving robots rarely manage to live up to their promise. Not so *Heavy Gear 2*. As a member of an elite force of mech-warriors, you must undergo a series of covert operations, ranging from search-and-destroy missions to capturing enemy personnel. Unlike most games of this ilk, running in all guns blazing will get you slaughtered faster than a pig in a bacon factory. Instead you must rely on stealth and tactics, as well as selecting the right armour and weaponry for each job, of which there's more than enough to keep the most ardent pyromaniac happy. The only problem is that the controls are tricky to get the hang of, making early battles frustrating and deaths all too frequent. The story is developed through in-engine cinematics, which are not only entertaining, but well acted, too. If you're a FPS fan who likes thinking as well as shooting, this deserves your attention.

PCZ VERDICT 75%

Sweet as a nut.

A meteor the size of a golf ball fell conveniently onto the course.

JACK NICKLAUS 6: GOLDEN BEAR CHALLENGE

Focus • £9.99 • Out now

After sitting through an intro of gratuitous glorification of the great man himself, you'll soon find that *Jack Nicklaus 6* is a rewarding if unspectacular golf sim. All the usual setup options are here, so you can configure a round to your liking, and there are six relatively varied courses to try your hand at.

Once you've done all the anal setup bits, such as creating your own player and making him look like a model for a Littlewoods menswear catalogue, it's time to head for the tee. Although the graphics are somewhat drab, the animation and physics are smooth and accurate. You can choose from the two- or three-click control systems, as well as a passable mouse swing option. Ideal for beginners and fun for veterans.

PCZ VERDICT 70%

TOTAL ANNIHILATION: KINGDOMS

£9.99 • Infogrames • Out now

This ambitious RTS sequel never quite manages to live up to expectations. Playing as one of four rival civilizations, you must wage war on your opponents in order to gain control of the land of Darien (who said originality was dead?). Along the way you have to collect resources (Mana), build armies and kill everyone who isn't waving one of your side's flags. *TA:K* concentrates primarily on combat, which can become fast and furious once large numbers of land, sea and air units get into a ruck. However, we had a real problem with the way the story is driven. Instead of controlling just one civilization throughout a campaign, you get to control all of them at some stage, as your command is constantly shifted between them. Subsequently, it all feels a bit staged, and you're never in charge of a side long enough to really care what happens to it. It's a shame, as it could have been so much better.

PCZ VERDICT 65%

Rhubarb, rhubarb, rhubarb, rhubarb.

The boys in blue get a royal roasting.

BEETLE CRAZY CUP

£9.99 • Infogrames • Out now

Beetle Crazy Cup is a passable arcade-style racer that fails to make the most of the PC's capabilities. There are five different race styles, including monster truck racing and long-distance jumping. Unfortunately, the handling of the different car types is way too similar, and subsequently the game is so easy that your five-year-old cousin would quickly feel patronised by it.

The simple controls and sickeningly cheesy music will keep you amused for a short while, as will the wide range of tracks. However, it's not long before the entertainment degenerates into boredom. To make matters worse, there are no Internet options, so unless you can coerce a family member to give you a game in the split-screen mode, you're pretty much stuck with the average computer AI. If we had to pick one word which best describes *BCB*, it would probably be 'mediocre'.

PCZ VERDICT 55%

Herbie goes apeshit.

"I've told you before, Derek. Stop eating so many beans."

WHEEL OF TIME

£9.99 • Infogrames • Out now

The good news is that *Wheel Of Time* uses the *Unreal* engine. The bad news is that it doesn't make the most of it. If you like FPSs that use spells instead of bazookas, this may well interest you, but be prepared for the some piss-poor AI, which requires little more skill than being able to run backwards while shooting at enemies who seem to think running straight at you while flapping their arms wildly is the best form of attack. The story and cut-scenes are what make *Wheel Of Time* really worth playing, as it's based on the excellent novel by Robert Jordan. There's also some great multiplayer options, so if you've got access to a LAN, it's well worth picking up a copy if you've got a couple of mates to play with.

PCZ VERDICT 59%

OUTCAST

£9.99 • Infogrames • Out now

Outcast is one of those games that people either love or dislike. The latter applies to us. Basically, it's a first/third-person shooter that uses painfully dated Voxel graphics to depict an alien world that your character, US Navy S.E.A.L Cutter Slade (oh please), has been transported to. Once there, you're subjected to endless droves of boring dialogue, as well as clipping that has your character floating in mid-air. When the action does finally kick off, it's about as exciting and easy to control as a Robin Reliant, and just to add insult to injury, your hard-as-nails action hero runs like a 10-year-old girl.

To its credit, the game is pretty long (with six varied continents to explore), has plenty of exotic weapons and gadgets, and you need to use stealth and tactics as well as violence. If you love listening to pointless conversations and are mad about shooting games, you will find some enjoyment here.

PCZ VERDICT 53%

Health warning: this strange-looking bloke could well bore you to death.

Two weeks of FREE gaming!
digitalmindgames.com

Never hate your enemies... it affects your judgement.

Corporation

THE ONLINE STRATEGY GAME

Months of gaming, thousands of players...

all accessible with your browser

NO downloads, NO plugins, NO waiting to play

For a FREE, two-week no-obligation trial, visit

digitalmindgames.com

Log on to take over

FEEDBACK

Some of you are a wee bit stroppy this month. Luckily our man *Martin Korda*'s big enough and ugly enough to take it

The best FPS since *Half-Life*.

IT'S YOUR SHOUT!

Feedback is here to offer you, the player, a platform to voice your opinions on any of the games reviewed in *PC ZONE* over the last three months. Whether you want to sing a game's praises or simply give it a verbal beating, we want to hear from you. Remember to keep your comments between 50 and 150 words and include your name, address and age.

WRITE TO **Feedback, *PC ZONE*, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF**

E-MAIL Alternatively, e-mail them to us at **letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk** with **'Feedback'** in the subject line.

STAR TREK VOYAGER

REVIEWED: #94, *PCZ* October
SCORE: 84%

What we said

PC ZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

"Considering the lack of competition, *Voyager* is probably the best single-player FPS since *Half-Life*."

What you thought

"*Star Trek: Voyager Elite Force* is the best *Star Trek* game ever made. Unfortunately, that counts for very little in a genre filled with so much crap, and overall I was rather disappointed. The graphics are good and the in-game cinematics are excellent, but the AI of the enemy creatures is so primitive that it makes *Doom* look like *Deus Ex*.

"After experiencing the superb AI in *Half-Life*, this just isn't good enough. As for the gameplay, since when has *Star Trek* involved blasting everything in sight?"

Chris Low

"Without a doubt, this is the best FPS since *Half-Life*. Your team work together intelligently, the enemies are scary and varied, and the action is a perfect mixture of puzzle solving and all-out blasting. After playing and hating the demo of *Daikatana*, this was like a breath of fresh air. However, my only criticism is that the multiplayer options aren't varied enough. Otherwise, it's perfect."

Mark Smith

COMMENT

Two completely contrasting views on show here. Let's start with you, Mark. Granted, the multiplayer options could have been a little more varied, although what's there is undoubtedly excellent. Let's hope Raven releases some add-ons soon. Chris, I couldn't agree more. Games that associate themselves with *Star Trek* are on the whole total cack, although I don't think you can put *Voyager Elite Force* into this category. It's more than fair to say that *ST:VEF* is nowhere near as good as *Half-Life* (11 per cent is a pretty big margin, if you ask me), but I bet you couldn't name me a FPS of a similar ilk released since *HL* that is much, much better than it. If you can, I'll happily run through Trafalgar Square in a bird suit shouting, "I want to be a pigeon" at the top of my voice. Needless to say, I feel pretty confident it won't come to this.

METAL GEAR SOLID

REVIEWED: #96, *PCZ* December
SCORE: 82%

What we said

PC ZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

"This is immense fun to play. You feel compelled to reach the next stage because you want to see what further twists the plot can take, and equally because some of the end-of-level bosses such as the Cyborg Ninja are so utterly enjoyable to do battle against."

What you thought

"After reading your review of *Metal Gear Solid*, I decided it was worth buying, even though you said there was no FPS mode (which is probably part of the reason that you marked the game down). After playing the game and reading the manual, I have found that there is a FPS mode, which is activated by pressing X twice quickly, and that you can move and shoot in that mode.

"So now that's been pointed out, will it get a higher score? It deserves at least 85-86 per cent."

A Brown

COMMENT

OK, OK, as it turns out there *is* a playable first-person viewpoint, but trying to play in this mode is next to impossible. A few of you have written in concerning the score and whether or not we'll be upping it now that this fact has come to light, but quite frankly, we still don't think it deserves more than 82 per cent. After all, what's the point of a first-person viewpoint if it's unusable? If the developers had spent a little longer on the idea and got it right, then *MGS* would probably be sitting proudly at the summit of the Action/Adventure category in our Top 100. All things considered, we still feel that our score is accurate.

CHAMP MAN 00/01

REVIEWED: #96, *PCZ* December
SCORE: 93%

What we said

PC ZONE CLASSIC

"That a series of text messages can cause genuine panic and elation is testament to the game's colossal power."

What you thought

"I have just finished reading another issue of *PC ZONE*. Yet again it's a good issue, but with one major surprise – 93 per cent for *CM 00/01*.

"Now, excuse me if I'm wrong, but *Deus Ex* got 94 per cent just a few issues ago. This puzzles me, as the last *CM* is described as 'a way of life', 'the word benchmark doesn't describe how much better than the competition this game is'. This is a perfect description, as even though it has been out for a year it's still the best game in terms of long-term playability and it's still in the charts.

"So could you tell me why, even though Steve Hill quite clearly loves the game, he only gave it 93 per cent when most

"Even though you said there was no FPS mode, after playing the game I found there is one, activated by pressing X twice"

A BROWN PUTS US RIGHT ON THE FINER POINTS OF METAL GEAR SOLID

OK, so it does have a first-person viewpoint, but let's face it, the game's pretty unplayable in that mode.

Midtown Madness 2: great game, but why no computer-controlled cars in multiplayer mode?

people, including me, who now have no social life thanks to this game, think it should rate at least a 95 per cent?"

Jon Mowjoudi

✪ "Having recently read your review of *CM 00/01* and the interview with the Collyer Brothers, I rushed out to buy a copy. I read about how many people thought this was just like *FIFA* (a new update every year) and for that reason the price was going to be £20, which I thought was a fair(ish) price for what is essentially an update.

"When I looked for a copy at Jakarta, I found that it was selling for £25. PC World was selling it at the same price. Why, if it was supposed to be £20, is it £25? A full-price game is £30 and there doesn't seem to be much difference. As I am a 'poor student' I didn't buy it, but I don't know if I can last much longer."

I Breen

Comment

Jon, when we stated that it's better than the opposition, we meant better than other football management games, not better than games *per se*. Even though *CM 00/01* is one of the best games of all time, it's not as ground-breaking as *Deus Ex*, and so received a lower mark. As for you, I Breen, it is a disgrace that the game is selling for £25, but if you stopped pissing all your money down the drain by sinking pints of watered-down cat's piss at the Students' Union bar on a regular basis, perhaps you'd be able to find that elusive £5 you need to buy the greatest management game of all time. It's about priorities, you know.

MIDTOWN MADNESS 2

REVIEWED: #96, *PCZ* December
SCORE: 84%

What we said

PCZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

"There's enough to reawaken the interest of fans of the original, whereas newcomers will instantly realise what the fuss was all about. It's enough to make grown adults whoop like children."

What you thought

✪ "My gripe is with *Midtown Madness 2*. I cannot believe that this is a sequel. After playing the first *MM* game, I emailed the developers to ask them whether or not they could include more ambient cars and police in the multiplayer games. However, this problem has been left unrectified in *MM2* and because of this, I've taken my copy back to the shops.

"Just imagine the chaos that could have been caused by eight players playing over a LAN if there were computer-controlled cars and police. Surely the inclusion of this option wouldn't have been asking too much?"

Alan White (KoNSirSCi-Fi from Tribes)

✪ "Thank goodness for *MM2* – it could not have come at a better time. After the disappointment of *Grand Prix 3* and the general lack of quality driving games over the last couple of months, it was a relief to finally find a racer that is not only fun, but easy to pick up.

"I've never had so much fun with a multiplayer game, and I think your score was way too low – 90 per cent would have been nearer the mark."

Phil Churchill

COMMENT

This is an all too common problem. Developers seem to think that churning out a sequel that is only marginally different to the original will please us gamers, when listening to our comments could actually improve things. We totally agree that having computer-controlled cars in the multiplayer game would have made *MM2* even better than it already is. Phil, you're one of the few people who wrote in claiming that our score was too low. Had the options mentioned by Alan been included, then perhaps your views would have been more valid. But as it is, we, and the many of you who wrote in, think that a score of 84 per cent is about right.

C&C: RED ALERT 2

REVIEWED: #95, *PCZ* November
SCORE: 82%

What we said

PCZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

"Remarkably well-rounded, the phrase 'more than the sum of its parts' could have been written with *Red Alert 2* in mind. Just remember not to expect too much and you'll be as impressed as we were."

What you thought

✪ "Well, it is more of the same, and that's exactly why I bought it. Your review was spot on. I wasn't expecting much more, as I made that mistake with *C&C: Tiberian Sun*. *Red Alert 2* improves on some aspects of the *C&C* series, and is hugely welcome after the disappointment of *Tiberian Sun*. The units are more versatile, with each side now having distinct advantages and disadvantages.

"One other complaint I have is that the multiplayer games are completely unfair. If you have more than one AI player, they are more than likely to ally with each other.

"Apart from that though, *Red Alert 2* is good entertainment and will keep you occupied for weeks, if not months."

King Rac

✪ "What a total and utter load of old rubbish. Perhaps I'm the most stupid person ever born, but after feeling more than a little annoyed that *C&C Red Alert* and *C&C: Tiberian Sun* were little more than updates of the original *C&C* game, I went out and bought a copy of *C&C: Red Alert 2*.

"To say it's an improvement over *Tiberian Sun* really isn't saying much, although I have to admit it is better. However, I paid £35 for a game that is nothing more than a remake of *Red Alert*, with vaguely improved graphics. The acting is still rubbish and after experiencing this, I've decided that I'll never buy a *C&C* game again."

RTS LoOrD

COMMENT

***C&C: Red Alert* is indeed more of the same, but what did you expect? The series has based its success on a formula, and while people keep buying *C&C* games, Westwood will keep churning them out. To its credit though, *Red Alert 2* is a massive improvement over *C&C: Tiberian Sun*, and its unit diversity gives it that extra dimension that *C&C:TS* sadly lacked. RTS LoOrD, if that is in fact your real name (we have our doubts), although I think you're being a little harsh, I can reassure you that you're not quite the most stupid person ever born, as I once met a person who'd bought a copy of *Daikatana*.**

Red Alert 2 is very similar to previous *C&C* games. Well, what were you expecting?

You don't train our creatures . . .
YOU UNLEASH THEM!

In the Magic: The Gathering® Trading Card game,
our creatures are battle-ready right out of the box.

Choose from thousands of the deadliest beasts imaginable.
Then set them loose on your friends. But be warned, fast wits and
devious tricks are needed to survive.
So keep your head in the game.

The best way to get going is with the starter-level game.
It has everything you and a friend need to begin playing right away.

Game Support Line: 0345 12 55 99
www.wizards.com/uk

MAGIC
The Gathering®
TRADING CARD GAME

Master the original.
Wherever great games are sold!

STARTER LEVEL

Wizards OF THE COAST

All trademarks are property of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. Illustration by Carl Critchlow. ©2000 Wizards.

HACK & CRASH

ONLINE EDITOR Richie Shoemaker

Last month I told you of my excitement at having ADSL finally installed on my home PC. Sure enough, I was completely blown away, not only by its speed, but also by the fact that the BT engineer, Carlos, turned up at my door at 9am on the dot.

As predicted, my modem is now well and truly redundant, my hard drive full of incriminating material (though not, I stress to add, to Gary Glitter proportions) and my lovely wife's tolerance is at breaking point.

Or at least that was the case for a few short days. However, I have since been attacked by a pock-faced digital highwayman and, as a result, my PC seems to have died a horrible death.

I'm not what you'd call technically minded. Installing a 3D card is as stressful to me as diffusing a bomb. Messing with registry settings is also something I rarely (read, never) engage in, and even if I did some malicious melonfarmer has ensured the cure to my PC's ailments is far beyond the reach of even that course of action.

I don't quite know how these squinty-eyed hackers ply their trade, but I'm convinced that my being online all day, downloading every single electro track I could remember from my youth, may have had something to do with it.

And the moral of the story? Get some security software to keep hackminded ****s (yes, I'm miffed) out of your hair. As soon as I manage to acquire a new hard drive, I certainly will.

PCZONLINE CONTENTS

108 PREVIEW: DARK AGE OF CAMELOT
110 COMPETITION: WIN A PC AND A DREAMCAST
112 REVIEW: COUNTER-STRIKE V.1.0
115 REVIEW: COMMAND &CONQUER: RED ALERT V1.002
116 ROUND-UP: GAMES SERVER BROWSERS

ONLINE REVIEWS POLICY

When it comes to mods and total conversions (TCs) for games such *Half-Life*, they are often released in beta form (ie unfinished) and are generally being updating constantly. When we review them we will always try to take into consideration that they are often worked on by teams working just for the love of it and released free for our enjoyment. Even so, there is a lot of pap out there and downloading such things can often be a waste of good surfing time.

Similarly with retail online games such as *EverQuest*, code is always being updated and although we can't provide regular updates we will try to review major ones as and when they occur.

NEWS

PLANETSIDE

***EverQuest* coder Verant is getting in on the action with its first ever 3D shooter – and mighty fine it looks, too**

Verant (*EverQuest*, *Sovereign*, *Star Wars Online*) has announced it is working on yet another online game, this time it's one with a much more action-orientated flavour than its current line-up.

PlanetSide is being touted as a massively multiplayer tactical first-person shooter – massively multiplayer in that unlike, say, *Counter-Strike*, you can have up to 400 people battling across one single 8km-square level and thousands across one planet. Where the tactics come in is with the importance of team-orientated goals, raiding enemy bases, destroying underground bunkers and so on.

Taking a back seat for once is the game's storyline, which is simply set around a galaxy-wide war fought between four sides where the ultimate aim is for your army to prevail. Importantly, Verant has opted to place a greater emphasis on the army rather than player-setup teams or clans. You can, of course, set up your own small group of warrior élite, but if you see others on your side in a spot of trouble you'd do well to lend a hand.

Unsurprisingly, *PlanetSide* won't be without any RPG elements, but these will act as rewards for loyalty and distinguished service rather than the *raison d'être* motivating the player. Help your comrades pull off a seemingly impossible victory in the face of mounting odds, or take out a flying gunship with your pistol, and you'll quickly flit through the ranks and gain enough points to take out ever more lethal weaponry. This ranges from common-as-muck machine guns and shotguns, to laser-guided rockets and beam weapons. And, like next year's *Tribes 2*, there will even be a healthy spread of vehicles to hop in, steal and rage across the skies and landscapes.

The points system will also allow you to upgrade characters, not by way of improving weapons accuracy or building up hit points, but in a number of skills you can advance in, which will mean you can hack into computer systems and doors, diffuse explosives or patch up wounded colleagues by administering medical aid.

GET REAL...

Gameplay wise we can expect a game along the lines of *Tribes*, but with a greater emphasis on realism. Certain weapons, for example, will be more accurate than others, and those who have played *Rainbow Six* or *Rogue Spear* will recognise a similar aiming system where the aiming reticule expands or contracts depending on what weapon is in use, how fast you're moving, your stance and armour worn. Heavy armour, though encumbering, will at least be able to stabilise heavier guns and the same is true of vehicle-mounted weaponry.

Players will have their own personal radar system, which will plot nearby vehicles. Foot soldiers, however, have to be detected visually so we expect plenty of sneaking around.

Though action and high-octane killing are of course central to the game, *PlanetSide* won't be without its social side. Rather than include a simple game lobby where players choose a game and chat inanely about their prowess, whole 3D-rendered safe areas will be set up, where players on the same side can walk around and exchange pleasantries.

Players will even have their own virtual apartments where they can communicate with others and log on to terminals to browse and select whatever missions are available. When you gain rank, your online home will reflect your higher social standing, to the point where you may want to invite your mates round for cocktails and cheesy nibbles.

TELL IT LIKE IT IS

Quite apart from the graphics, what makes *PlanetSide* such an enticing prospect is that having practically cornered the online RPG market with *EverQuest* – a game that regularly pulls in hundreds of thousands of online players – Verant is possibly the only developer who can deliver the goods.

When Verant says its game will be able to handle seamless indoor and outdoor environments, each with hundreds of players exchanging fire, you know it isn't pulling a fast one. In fact, the game has already been in development for more than a year and with release due at the end of 2001 and beta testing scheduled for the summer, you can be sure that if any one game is sure to drag first-person fans and role-players together, *PlanetSide* may well be the game to do it.

Follow the latest developments at www.station.sony.com/planetside and keep your eyes peeled for a full preview early next year.

With hundreds of thousands of people playing its games, Verant certainly knows the meaning of 'massively multiplayer'.

Online beta testing should commence in August.

Verant has created the 3D engine for *PlanetSide* from scratch.

Should keep *UO* fans happy until the sequel.

The 3D characters are sure to draw players back into the fold.

Even the paper doll has been given a 3D facelift.

ULTIMA ONLINE: THIRD DAWN

Four years on and *UO* is about to get its biggest update yet

Having left *EverQuest* to hog the spotlight in recent months, Origin's RPG *Ultima Online* is making a triumphant return with *Third Age*, an expansion that sees the 1997-released game embrace 3D for the first time.

There will be 13 new monsters included in the update, as well as a slew of new weapons. More significantly, a whole new landmass will be crowbarred in – Ilshenaur, a frontier-like province that current players will eventually be able to settle.

And then there's the small matter of a graphical update, one that sees all the current characters and monsters, plus all the new ones, remodelled to take advantage of 3D acceleration. The land itself will be set across a 3D mesh, meaning that directional light-sourcing and 3D particle effects will be a reality at last for online *Ultima* fans, and the monsters, players and their pets will be able to take advantage of more than 700 individual animations – a technology that Origin demonstrated last summer at E3 as part of its advances with the full-3D sequel. And if you're still playing your games on a P166, don't worry, Origin hasn't thrown away all the 2D sprites just yet – they will still be there for those of you who prefer them.

"Young man. There's a place you can go."

Behind the scenes, Origin is updating the network code, hopefully banishing for good the many complaints of lag-ridden games. New sound and music are also on the cards, and because the game seems to be gaining popularity in Asia, we can expect a more Oriental flavour this time around.

The add-on should be available to download – for a small fee – late winter or early spring, with a full-price, 3D upgraded *UO* boxset sure to hit the shelves around the same time. Whether this fourth version of the game will be enough to claw back old regulars from *EverQuest* remains to be seen.

Those without prejudice might like to start their quest for more information at www.uo.com

MOD WATCH

What's happening and where to go to catch up on all the latest freebie add-ons

Unreal Fortress.

Recently in the *PC ZONE* office we heard rumblings within our local *Counter-Strike* community that some were soon to desert the ranks and head off back to *Unreal Tournament* for their lunchtime thrill. We won't be gone long, of course, but the release of *Unreal Fortress* (www.unrealfortress.com) has managed to rekindle interest in the old mod, originally developed for *Quake* and soon to see a version for *Soldier Of Fortune* (www.sof-fortress.com) and even *Deus Ex* (www.rpgplanet.com/deusex/deusfort).

***Imperial Battles* (www.chaosrealm.com/imperial) is another *Fortress*-style mod in development – one of the many that constantly seem to be appearing for the two-year-old *Half-Life*. What makes *Imperial Battles* such a hot prospect, however, is its *Star Wars* theme, with Rebels facing off against the Dark Side – perhaps even old-skool *Star Wars* versus new, although an army of Gungans fighting hordes of Ewoks is more than we could bear.**

Imperial Battles for Half-Life.

On the *Quake III Arena* front, the developers of our favourite mod *Jailbreak* (Version 1.0 of which is available at http://q3jb.teamreaction.com) are joining forces with the guys behind *Prisoners Of War* (www.bkp-mods.com), a similar team-based add-on. Together the two teams (acting as one) will release *Jailbreak: PoW* – and we can't wait.

Finally, a quick note to those readers who this month have been wondering where all the mod reviews have gone. Well, after a quick rethink, we have decided to change the way *PC ZONE* reviews these wonderful freebies. As from next month our mod expert will be picking his way through the latest and greatest, which means that not only will we be able to cover more mods in greater depth, we'll have them all in one place and we'll try a hell of a lot harder to get them on the coverdisk.

And that, my mod-loving chums, is a promise.

Jailbreak for Quake III Arena.

excessive

force

WingMan Force 3D

WingMan RumblePad™

WingMan Formula™ Force GP

It's the closest thing to reality. WingMan™ Force 3D. Get the advantage you need to win, the sensations you need to make it real. Feel the force, with Logitech®.

www.logitech.com

WingMan

Available at [illegible] Direct, Macro, PC World, Strictly Computers, Staples, particular versions of Sidewalk Court Bows, Tonight and many independent computer retailers. For further information, call [illegible]

Logitech®

Not a beard in sight.

The beta models are sound and can only get better.

Inspect a norse.

"Go away or I shall taunt you a second time."

The Glastonbury Festival, circa 987 AD.

DARK AGE OF

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Mythic Entertainment
PUBLISHER TBA
WEBSITE www.darkageofcamelot.com
RELEASE DATE Q3 2001

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Online RPG
- 'Realm'-based PvP
- Player-driven economy
- Looks amazing

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Then check out these sights

http://www.darkageofcamelot.com/ – Official site

http://camelotvault.ign.com/ – *Camelot* vault

http://camelot.stratics.com/ – *Camelot* stratics

http://daoc.solutus.nl/ – Compilation of all the developer posts to date, and quite a useful site

Jed Norton: **he likes to push the pram a lot**

Whether you subscribe to the 6th century Dark Age version of King Arthur or the French romanticised epics as told by Hollywood, the Arthurian legends are replete with tales of heroism, war and quests. All in all, an ideal setting for an online RPG.

Mythic Entertainment is taking a mixture of both forms of the legend and adding a few extra traditional fantasy elements to boot. Set after the death of Arthur, the Kingdom of Albion is trying to defend itself against the forces of two opposing realms, the Norse and the Hibernians. Players can quest for glory, found a trading empire or engage in player-to-player combat with opponents in the other realms and with AI monsters within their own realms.

Dark Age Of Camelot has possibly been the fastest moving game from concept-to-beta in recent memory – so fast that it is taking the fan base a little while to realise that this game is no longer simply 'vapourware' as are so many of its potential rivals. The first beta stage of *DAOC* is now over and beta2 is well underway. Hundreds of lucky testers are already enjoying the realm of Albion... and what a great realm it is.

Graphically, *DAOC* is just superb. Even in beta the early models are good, and some of the release versions are the best we have seen in an online RPG. Basilisks roaming the Salisbury Plains look and move like the real thing (C'mon, you must have seen them?), while Undead Romans look like a cross between Romero's Living Dead and legionaries from *Gladiator*. Even the buildings look and feel just right (if you excuse any historical inaccuracies), and when running over the plains you will suddenly stop and say: "Blimey – it's Stonehenge!" No signposts required.

"Graphically, *DOAC* is superb. Basilisks look like the real thing, while Undead Romans look like a cross between Romero's Living Dead and legionaries from *Gladiator*"

The completed spell effects in the beta are also excellent. The mage-shielding spell has to be seen to be fully appreciated – just think of the shields in the film *Dune* and you'll have an idea. Character models and items are not yet completed – it is a beta after all – yet even these are extremely good and indicate the great potential for the final product. *Camelot* is looking good!

DAYS AND KNIGHTS

Class and game balancing is the major thrust of the beta at this point, and early indications are more than promising. The typical class-based characters of RPGs are all present, but their implementation is often far from typical. Clerics, for example, are capable of more than simply healing and throwing about the odd buff

Not all the spell effects are in, but they look good so far.

Online RPG of 2001? Quite possibly.

All you'll want to do is explore.

You can be a cleric, but you don't have to act like one.

You can't get the staff these days. Sorry.

CAMELOT

BETA TEST

(beneficial spells). Buffs can be applied once to group members and need never be re-applied, unless one of them dies. A special skill is required to do this, but this frees up the Cleric to have a far more active role in groups than is usual.

Similarly, Paladins are not the usual standby healers and so-so warriors. Paladin spells are heavily group-orientated and have been designed very cleverly to meld with those of the Cleric without imposing on one another.

With much still to be completed in the early races and classes, it is hard to predict the final outcome. Solo and group hunting are both feasible and enjoyable, though each has its benefits and drawbacks. You do not have to fight in a group, and judging by the current state of gameplay, *Camelot* is looking like a winner on that front.

Player Vs Player (PvP) and the opposing realms have not yet been introduced to the beta, so these elements remain an unknown quantity at this point. What can already be seen is that the world in which this will eventually all take place is a very large and smoothly designed affair. The player moves about within what could best be described as a bubble. This bubble allows the player to move seamlessly within the realms, each of which has a Homeland and a Borderland.

Currently, the Homelands of Albion take about an hour or so to run from end-to-end, and during the entire process you don't need to zone and you don't experience any boundary glitches at all – it's all very smooth indeed. The value that this adds to the feeling of being in a large land and to your immersion within the game cannot be overstated. When you first enter *Camelot* all you want to do is go and explore – it looks and feels that good. Even the chins of hardened beta1 testers will drop to the floor as the moon drops slowly over Stonehenge or dips silently below the horizon at Llyn Barfog.

ALBION ROVERS

The layout and naming of the lands of Albion is also well done. If you know modern Britain then you won't object to any of the placements, names or the feel of the areas. They may not be entirely accurate but they certainly do make sense and are well conceived. Similarly, the monsters are not your usual high-fantasy mish-mash. Mythic has obviously drawn from a good knowledge of ancient myth for all the realms, and some of the local legends are extremely well researched. Even monster names are more appropriate than those of many online role-playing games and utilise Celtic, Welsh and Norse legends. Mythic is not being shy with treating the gamer to a host of 'new' names and creatures – beware, for example, the Cwn Anwnn of Llyn Barfog.

Dark Age Of Camelot has risen from the depths of obscurity and burst on to the forefront of upcoming MMORPGs and from what we have seen, deservedly so. If the current standard of work continues, *DOAC* is a sure-fire winner... and you can take that to the bank. PZ

"Mythic has drawn from a good knowledge of ancient myth for the realms, and some of the legends are very well researched"

Monica from *Friends*. Well, maybe not.

COMPETITION

WIN!

WIN A DELL PC PLUS A SEGA DREAMCAST

To celebrate the *Supercross Kings* release and the success of *Halcyon Sun*, Freeloader has decided that, as well as giving away games for free, it wants to rid itself of a couple of games machines. Unfortunately, rather than offload them to us (our PII-450s are getting a bit creaky), Freeloader has decided that readers of *PC ZONE* should have the chance to win both a top-of-the-range PC and a Dreamcast console (which could be a useful paperweight if nothing else), plus three full games to play on Sega's machine. Of course, there are also plenty of free PC games thrown in. And, with a modem to go with the PIII-800Mhz PC, you can log onto the Freeloader website (**www.freeloader.com**) and download games such as the original never-before-seen *Halcyon Sun*. You can also download plenty of other great titles, such as *Hidden & Dangerous*, *Jimmy White's Cueball 2*, *Magic & Mayhem* and *Grand Theft Auto* – all of which are still on sale at software emporiums, which means you would normally have to shell out hard currency to play them. From the Freeloader website, all these games, plus a good few others, are free. For Nothing. Gratis. Nuffink.

THE PRIZE

A Dell PIII-800Mhz PC featuring 64Mb RAM, 15 Gb hard drive, 12x DVD-ROM drive, 32Mb NVIDIA M64 TNT 2 graphics card, Creative SoundBlaster 64v Sound card, 15in Monitor, 56K modem, speakers and Windows Millenium Edition.The winner will also receive a Sega Dreamcast 128-bit console (with a modem of its own), plus three top Dreamcast games; *Soul Calibur*, *Crazy Taxi* and *Chu-Chu Rocket*.

HOW TO WIN

Below we have cunningly glued together a load of game titles, some of which are games you can download free from the Freeloader website, others you would have to spend money on if you wanted to play them. Your task is to find out how many of the games below are available on the Freeloader site. Go to **www.freeloader.com** and once you've registered (don't worry that's free too), go to our competition section and enter the magic number. It's that simple. Next, all you have to do is wait until after January 11, and if you're a winner, you'll get an email telling you that you're the lucky so-and-so.

UNREALTOURNAMENTHALFLIFEHALCYONSUNCHAMPIONSHIPMANAGERSHOGUNRATATTACKPROPINBALLTHEWEBSTARQUAKEHIDDENANDDANGEROUSTHREELIONSTHEMEPARKGRANDTHEFTAUTOELITEMAGICANDMAYHEMBENEATHASTEELSKYGUNSHIPDAIKATANAISPOODAVEWOODSISATIGHTBASTARDWHONEVERBUYSBEER

Terms and conditions: Only entries completed on the Freeloader website submitted before January 11 2001 will be entered into the prize draw. Winners will be notified by email from Freeloader. No cash alternative. Prizes not necessarily as shown. No correspondence will be entered into. Freeloader's decision is final. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply

freeloader.com
GIVEAWAY WORTH
£1,400!

20,000 products

3,000 reviews

bags of expert advice

all the latest prices

one amazing web site

www.computershopper.co.uk

The only site you'll ever need for buying computer products

personal computers • notebook computers • printers • scanners • digital cameras • modems • CD and DVD drives • monitors • handheld computers • reference software
programming software • accessories • utilities • education • internet • games • 3D, animation & video software • web graphics software • video and photo capture
PDAs • software • graphics software • spreadsheets • illustration software • presentation graphics • audio software • business software • office suites
word processors • databases • personal finance software • speech recognition software • personal information software • project management software
networking • hard disks • tape drives • desktop publishing software • graphics cards • email • operating systems • components • sound cards • web tools • security

REVIEWS

COUNTER-STRIKE V1.0

Free download from www.counter-strike.net (upgrade from beta v7.1 on CD) • Out now

The new UMP 45 proves its worth.

Good triumphs once again.

Unfortunately the pain animations have gone.

The most impossible review in history tackled by the most impossible reviewer we know. *Paul Presley*, go go go…

PC ZONE CLASSIC

Jesus. What on earth can you say about *Counter-Strike* that hasn't already been said on 87 per cent of the world's gaming websites? And in 94 per cent of the world's gaming magazines. And in nearly 100 per cent of the world's gaming offices every single lunchtime since civilisation's favourite *Half-Life* mod first appeared back in the long, slow winter months of 1999. (Although true *CS* veterans maintain that it only achieved playable status several versions down the line, when it blossomed – ugly duckling-style – from a clunky amateurish mod to the Best Game In The World™.)

Especially when you consider that there isn't exactly a world of difference between this and version 7.1, and that it's only being covered now because it's finally left the unofficial 'beta' stage and has now gone 'legit'.

Which, basically, is a fancy way of saying you can pay money for it in your local gaming emporium – providing your local gaming emporium is located in Wyoming, Indianapolis or New Jersey. 'Merkins' are getting the full damn game, boxed to the nines, available for around 30 of their *Yankee-dollars*. It comes complete with manual, training level and a collection of other *Half-Life* mods, including *Redemption*, *Opposing Force* and the gunslinging *Wanted*.

I can see you now… your firm brow furrowed in curiosity. Why should they bother paying money when it's available right there on the Internet free of charge? There, behind those Teen Fisting sites and *Star Trek* mass debate forums (you heard).

Well, my puzzled little monkey man, the retail version is a stand-alone jobby. Pay money for *Counter-Strike* and you won't already be needing a copy *of Half-Life* nestled on your D: drive next to the illegal MP3 folder.

All of which is pointless detail to you, though, our dear upstanding and, above all, British readers. We still have to download the 82Mb installation file ourselves (or the 20Mb update for version 7.1 owners) and won't get any of the extras. Sierra's official line on this is that it felt it would be a bit of a cheek charging money for something that's available free, and it's not like there isn't a single one of you reading this that doesn't already own *Half-Life*, is there?

But what exactly is new in v1.0? Not a heck of a lot is the

But some things never change.

Sod the rules.

Behind you...

simple answer. The biggest change is with the player skins. When we first saw them we couldn't quite believe what was on the screen. Certainly they have a little bit more detail to them, but they seem to, well, how do I put this politely... they mince rather than run. At times they look as though the tension has got to them and there were no available toilets nearby. Apparently, from what we gather by reading the newsgroups, this is because the chap known as 'Gooseman', who was behind the lovely v7.1 skins, had nothing to do with these official ones. We can only hope Gooseman returns soon.

Also new are the weapons. All the usual guns have been given slightly different names and are joined by a brand-new counter-terrorist pistol, a terrorist sniper rifle and a general-purpose machine gun. They won't drag you away from your favourite Steyer Augs or M3 Carbines, but more guns are always welcome.

The only other real difference is that several of the old favourite maps have had cosmetic tweaks here and there, with a few new doors and ladders where once were blank walls. On the plus side, the single best *CS* map ever made, Dust, has reverted to its original, non-altered layout. Never mess with a classic, we say.

Apart from that, there really isn't all that much to say about the new version. No doubt we'll see a v1.1 patch sometime soon that will correct the skins and add further tweaks, but to be more honest than a Frenchman at a smoking contest, *Counter-Strike* has really been taken as far as it can go. All we will ever see from here on in are nips and tucks – and the occasional new map.

POUR QUOI?

Anyway, my lovely, lovely children. What interests me more is why we're still playing the thing. Look at the alternatives. Both *Strike Force* and *Tactical Ops* for *Unreal Tournament* do the team-based, real-world tactical thing and have better graphics to boot. *SWAT 3* recently released a multiplayer version and takes the counter-terrorist teamwork aspects to whole new levels.

If you take a step back for a moment and come at *CS* with an objective eye, you'll see that in many respects it looks like the poor second cousin of the online, squad-based combat genre.

And yet... as five minutes to six in the evening creeps into view like a jungle predator sizing up its prey for the night, the nervous trigger-fingers start twitching and the furtive eyebrows start darting from desk to desk to see if anyone else's hands are moving into the 'WSAD' configuration. Slowly, but steadily, the Word files are saved and closed, the familiar 'clunk, click' of the loading screen starts to be played out across the office and the beast is fed once more.

So why is this? Why is it still as popular today as when we first came across it? In truth the answer is a simple one. The evidence is that as the *CS* sessions begin in the office, you'll always see the *PC ZONE* art boys leaving their sanctified little enclaves and start migrating towards whichever PCs happen to be free that particular day. For art boys, you see, work with Macintoshes. And while *Quake III* and *Unreal Tournament* can both be found lurking on the Apple variants, the *Half-Life* engine remains solely a PC affair. Which is just the way we like it.

The trend for online PC gaming, certainly where deathmatch-style games are concerned, is that where we lead, the other machines eventually follow. But by the time they catch up, we've usually found something better to concern ourselves with, which keeps Mac owners in their rightful second-class state. Unfortunately, we always know that no matter how much we enjoy a particular game, eventually it will be embraced by the heretics and that pains us so.

"The *Half-Life* engine is solely a PC affair, keeping Mac owners in their rightful second-class state – the way we like it"

In *Counter-Strike* we've finally found something that is ours and ours alone. Not only is it fun to play, but it reaffirms our position at the top of the gaming evolutionary tree.

So, basically, what we're saying is that above everything else, above the simplicity of the game, the intuitive nature of the controls and the surprising fluidity with which it plays online, *CS*'s true genius – its greatest feature if you will – is that it pisses off Mac owners like you wouldn't believe. For which it must be applauded. *Counter-Strike*, we take our hat off to you, sir.

Long may you reign. PCZ

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Oh, come on

DOWNERS Well, the new skins take some getting used to • Nothing radically different to the last version

93 Like you had to ask

The new skins in all their 'glory'.

Tel: 07000 643258
Fax: 01322 276577

VISA MasterCard

MID-BLUE'S **GAME ZONE**

www.mid-blue.com
sales@mid-blue.com

TOP 10 NEW RELEASES

1. CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 00.01 £19.99
2. C&C RED ALERT 2 £28.99
3. SUDDEN STRIKE £28.99
4. AGE OF EMPIRES 2 THE CONQUERORS £21.99
5. STAR TREK VOYAGER ELITE FORCE £27.99
6. HOMEWORLD CATACLYSM £26.99
7. THE SIMS - LIVIN IT UP £19.99
8. HALF LIFE GENERATIONS £28.99
9. COMBAT FLIGHT SIM 2 £27.99
10. SWAT 3 ELITE EDITION £26.99

ACES COLLECTION £14.99
AERIAL COMBAT MANOEUVRES 1918 + JOYPAD £14.99
AGE OF EMPIRES 2 £27.99
AGE OF EMPIRES 2 ADD ON THE CONQUERORS £21.99
AGE OF EMPIRES GOLD £19.99
AGE OF WONDERS £27.49
AIRPORT 2000 VOL 2 £19.99
AIRPORT INC £22.99
ALICE £28.99
ALIEN NATIONS £19.99
ALLEGIANCE £25.99
ALPHA CETAURI PLANETARY £14.99
ANCIENT WORLDS - PHARAOH & CAESAR 3 £29.99
ARCADE FEVER INC. 5 GAMES £14.99
ARMY MEN OPERATION MELTDOWN £19.99
ASHERONS CALL £19.99
B-17 FLYING FORTRESS £27.99
BABYLON 5 REF. GUIDE £14.49
BALDURS GATE & TALES OF THE SWORD COAST £14.99
BATTLEZONE 2 £19.99
BIG. NAMES BEST GAMES 3 £22.99
BIG. NAMES BEST GAMES 4 £24.99
BLAIR WITCH VOL 1 £19.99
BLIZZARD TRIPLE £28.99
BRAVEHEART £18.99
C&C & COVERT OPS DISK £18.99
C&C RED ALERT + AFTERMATH & COUNTERSTRIKE £19.99
C&C RED ALERT 2 £28.99
C&C TIBERIAN SUN £19.99
C&C TIBERIAN SUN - FIRESTORM ADD ON £14.99
C&C WORLDWIDE WARFARE COLLECTION £25.99
CARMAGEDON TDR 2000 £19.99
CEASAR 3 £14.99
CHAMP MANAGER 00/01 £19.99
CHESSMASTER 7000 £22.99
CHICKEN RUN FUN PACK £17.99
CIVILISATION CALL TO POWER £18.99
CIVILISATION 2 TEST OF TIME £23.99
CLOSE COMBAT 3 £18.99
CODENAME EAGLE £26.99
COMBAT FLIGHT SIM 2 £27.99
COMMANCHE 3 £12.99
CONSTRUCTOR £14.99
CRIMSON SKIES £27.99
CROC 2 £18.99
CUTTHROATS £14.99
DARK OMEN & SYNDICATE WARS £14.99
DARK REIGN 2 £25.99
DEATHTRAP DUNGEON £12.99
DELTA FORCE 2 £19.99
DEMOLITION RACER £23.99
DEUS EX £28.99
DEVIL INSIDE £27.99
DIABLO 2 £27.99
DINO CRISIS £25.99
DIPLOMACY £26.99
DIV GAMES STUDIO £24.99
DOGS OF WAR £26.99
DRAKKEN £23.99
DUKES OF HAZZARD £18.99
DUNGEON KEEPER & MAGIC CARPET 2 £14.99
EARTH 2150 £24.99
EARTHWORM JIM 3D £16.99
ESCAPE FROM MONKEY IS. £28.99
EURO LEAGUE FOOTBALL £24.99
F-16 MULTIROLE FIGHTER & MIG - 29 FULCRUM £23.99
F22 LIGHTENING 3 14.99
F/A-18 SIMULATOR (JANES) £19.99
FA PREM MAN 2001 £19.99
FIFA 2001 £28.99
FINAL FANTASY 8 £27.99
FLIGHT UNLIMITED 3 £27.99
FLYING HEROES £26.99
FORD RACING £24.99
FORMULA 1 2000 £19.99
FORMULA 1 WORLD GP 99 £27.99
GABRIEL KNIGHT MYSTERIES £14.99
GIANT KILLERS EURO MAN PLUS FOOTBALL MOUSE £18.99
GIANTS - CITIZEN KABUTO £27.99
GRAND PRIX 3 £27.99
GROUND CONTROL £24.99
GUNMAN CHRONICLES £27.99
GUNSHIP £27.99
HALFLIFE £19.99
HALFLIFE OPPOSING FORCES £16.99
HALFLIFE GENERATIONS £28.99
HEROES OF MIGHT & MAGIC TRILOGY £25.99
HOGS OF WAR £27.99
HOMEWORLD £19.99
HOMEWORLD CATACLYSM £26.99
HIDDEN & DANGEROUS £19.99
H&D - EXPANSION PACK £12.99
H&D + SPEC OPS 2 £26.99
IMPERIUM GALACTICA 2 £19.99
INDIANA JONES & THE INFERNAL MACHINE £19.99
ICEWIND DALE £28.99
IN COLD BLOOD £24.99
INFESTATION £19.99
INVICTUS £27.99
JANES UNITED STATES AIR FORCE £28.99
JANES WW2 FIGHTERS £24.99
KINGPIN £19.99
KLINGON HONOUR GUARD £12.99
LANDS OF LORE 3 £15.99
LEMMINGS REVOLUTION £24.99
LIATH £14.99
MAJESTY £26.99
MAGIC THE GATHERING - GAME & ENCYCLOPEDIA £29.99
MAKING WAVES - MUSIC CREATION SAMPLER £28.99
MARTIAN GOTHIC £24.99
MDK 2 £27.99
MECHWARRIOR 3 £19.99
MESSIAH £27.99
METAL FATIGUE £23.99
METAL GEAR SOLID £27.99
MIDTOWN MADNESS 2 £28.99
MIG ALLEY £17.99
MIGHT & MAGIC MILLENNIUM EDITION £25.99
MOBIL 1 RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP £26.99
MONOPOLY 2 £14.99
MOTORCROSS MADNESS 2 £27.99
MS BASEBALL 2000 £16.99
MS BASEBALL 2001 £18.99
MUPPET TREASURE ISLAND £17.99
NASCAR 3 £25.99
NATIONS - FIGHTER COMMAND £25.99
NEED FOR SPEED 4 ROAD CHALLENGE £18.99
NEED FOR SPEED 5 PORSCHE 2000 £28.99
NERF ARENA BLAST £23.99
NOCTURNE £14.99
NOX £19.99
OFFICIAL FORMULA 1 RACING £18.99
PHARAOH £19.99
PHARAOH ADD ON CLEOPATRA £19.99
PHEONIX £14.99
PINBALL COLLECTORS ED. £23.99
PLANESCAPE TOURNAMENT £25.99
POPULOUS THE BEGINNING £17.99
QUAKE 3 ARENA £19.99
QUEST FOR GLORY 5 £19.99
RAYMAN 2 £24.99
RC RACING £14.99
RED BARON 3D £15.99
RESIDENT EVIL 3 NEMESIS £28.99
REVENANT £14.99
REVOLT £14.99
RISK 2 £25.99
ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON £18.99
ROLLER TYCOON ADDED ATTRACTIONS £9.99
ROLLER TYCOON LOOPY LANDSCAPES £12.99
RUGBY 2001 £27.99
SEPTERRA CORE £22.99
SETTLERS 3 £18.99
SHADOWMAN £14.99
SHOGUN TOTAL WAR £27.99
SILVER £22.99
SIM CITY 3000 WORLD EDITION £27.99
SIMS £27.99
SLAVE ZERO £27.99
SOLDIER OF FORTUNE £25.99
SOULBRINGER £24.99
SOUL REAVER LEGACY OF KAIN £14.99
SOUTH PARK CHEFS LUV SHACK £14.99
SOUTH PARK RALLY £27.99
SOUTH PARK THE GAME £14.99
SPEC OPS 2 £19.99
STARCRAFT BATTLE CHEST INCLUDES BROOD WAR & HINT BOOK £25.99
STARLANCER £27.99
STARSIEGE UNIVERSE STARSIEGE & TRIBES £25.99
S.TREK ARMADA £27.99
S.TREK COLLECTION £22.99
S.TREK HIDDEN EVIL £12.99
S.TREK KLINGON ACADEMY £27.99
S.TREK STARFLEET COMM. £25.99
S.TREK VOYAGER ELITE FORCE £27.99
S.WARS FORCE COMMANDER £27.99
S.WARS ROGUE SQUADRON £19.99
S.WARS EPISODE 1 THE GUNGAN FRONTIER £18.99
S.WARS EPISODE 1 THE PHANTOM MENACE £19.99
S.WARS EPISODE 1 PIT DROIDS £18.99
S.WARS JEDI KNIGHT DARK FORCES 2 £14.99
S.WARS X-WING COLLECTOR SERIES £19.99
S.WARS X-WING VS TIE FIGHTER & BALANCE OF POWER £18.99
STUPID INVADERS £24.99
SU-27 FLANKER 2 £23.99
SUDDEN STRIKE £28.99
SUPERBIKES 2000 £19.99
SUPERBIKES 2001 £28.99
SUPERBIKE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP £14.99
SUZUKI ALSTARE EXTREME RACING £28.99
SWAT 3 ELITE EDITION £26.99
SYSTEM SHOCK 2 £24.99
TACHYON THE FRINGE £19.99
THE MODERN WARFARE COLLECTION: FALCON4 M1 TANK2 APACHE HAVOCK £24.99
THEME PARK & THEME HOSPITAL £17.99
THEME PARK WORLD £19.99
THEOCRACY £27.99
THIEF GOLD £13.99
THIEF 2 £19.99
TIGER WOODS 99 £18.99
TIGER WOODS TOURNAMENT COURSES £9.99
TIGER WOODS VEGAS COURSES £9.99
TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2000 £19.99
TOCA 2 £14.99
TOMB RAIDER 2 GOLD £10.99
TOMB RAIDER 3 GOLD £11.99
TOMB RAIDER 4 THE LAST REVELATION £12.99
TOMB RAIDER TRILOGY £18.99
TONY HAWKES 2 £27.99
TOTAL SOCCER 2000 £18.99
TRAFFIC GIANT £24.99
TRAINTOWN £14.99
ULTIMA ASSENTION £27.99
ULTIMATE GOLF SIM £24.99
VAMPIRE - THE MASQUERADE REDEMPTION £27.99
VIPER RACING £18.99
VIRTUAL SKIPPER £24.99
WALL STREET TYCOON £24.99
WARHAMMER 40K RITES OF WAR £19.99
WARZONE 2100 £14.99
ZEUS £27.99
ZORK TRIPLE PACK £14.99

This is just a small selection of our range. If you do not see what you want, please call. All of our prices include VAT & Delivery in the UK. Calls may be recorded for quality of service. We are open from 9am to 8pm Mon-Fri, 10am to 6pm Sat-Sun. Mid-Blue International Ltd, Great Queen Street, Dartford, Kent, DA1 2TJ.

BUDGET

ABOMINATION THE NEMESIS PROJECT £9.99
ACTUA ICE HOCKEY 2 £8.99
ACTUA SOCCER 2 £8.99
ALIEN CROSSFIRE ALPHA CENTAURI ADD ON £9.99
ALPHA CENTAURI £7.99
ALPHA CENTAURI AND ALIEN CROSSFIRE £14.99
AMF PRO BOWLING 3D £9.99
AMIGA EMULATOR WITH 800 GAMES £9.99
AMOK £8.49
ARCADE GREATEST HITS 2 £6.99
ARCADE POOL 2 £9.99
ARMOURED FIST 2 £9.99
AXIS & ALLIES £9.99
BALLS OF STEEL £9.99
BARRAGE £8.99
BEETLE CRAZY CUP £9.99
BEDLAM £8.49
BLADE RUNNER £9.99
BLOOD 2 THE CHOSEN £9.99
BOSS RALLY £8.99
BROKEN SWORD £9.49
C64 EMULATOR WITH 3,000 GAMES £10.99
CEASAR 2 £9.99
CARMAGEDDON £8.49
CASINO DELUX 2 £9.99
CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 3 £7.99
CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 99/2000 £9.99
CIVILISATION £5.99
CIVIL WAR GENERAL £7.99
COLIN MACRAE RALLY £9.99
COMMANCHE GOLD £9.99
CONSPIRACY £6.99
CREATURE SHOCK £6.99
CROC £9.99
DAIKATANA £9.99
DARK REIGN-FUTURE OF WAR £9.99
DARK VENGEANCE £9.99
DELTA FORCE £9.99
DIABLO £9.99
DIABLO ADD ON - HELLFIRE £9.99
DISCWORLD NOIR £9.99
DRIVER £9.99
DUNE £8.99
DUNGEON KEEPER 2 £9.99
EARTHSEIGE 2 £7.99
EASTERN FRONT £9.99
EUROPEAN AIR WAR £9.99
F14 FLEET DEFENDER £6.99
F22 RAPTOR £9.99
F/A 18 HORNET 3.0 £8.49
FADE TO BLACK £8.99
FA PREMIER LEAGUE ALL STAR £9.99
FA PREM. LEAGUE MAN. 99 £8.99
FA PREM. LEAGUE MAN. 2000 £9.99
FIGHTER SQUADRON S.D.O.E £9.99
FLY £9.99
FORMULA 1 GRAND PRIX £4.99
FORTUNE COOKIE £4.99
FUTURE COP LAPD £8.99
GABRIEL KNIGHT 3 £9.99
GALAGA £9.99
GAME VAULT 1 £13.99
GAME VAULT 2 £13.99
GOAL £6.99
GODS £4.99
GRAND PRIX LEGENDS £9.99
GTA 2 £9.99
HAND OF FATE £4.99
HEAVY GEAR £7.99
HERETIC £8.49
HERETIC 2 £9.99
HEXEN 2 £9.99
HIND £4.99
IMPERIUM GALACTICA £9.49
INTERSTATE 76 & MECHWARRIOR 2 MERCS £9.99
IRON ASSAULT £4.99
JIMMY WHITES SNOOKER £6.99
JIMMY WHITES 2 CUEBALL £9.99
JOHNNY BAZOOKATONE £5.99
LEGACY OF KAIN - BLOOD OMEN £9.99
LE MANS 24 HR £9.99
LODERUNNER 2 £8.49
LORDS OF MAGIC £9.99
MECHWARRIOR 2 & ADD ON £9.99
M.I.A - MISSING IN ACTION £8.49
MICHELIN RALLY MASTERS £9.99
MOTO RACER 2 £9.99
MYTH 2 £9.99
NASCAR REVOLUTION £8.99
NASCAR ROAD RACING £9.99
NETSTORM - ISLANDS AT WAR £9.99
NIGHTMARE CREATURES £9.99
NOMAD SOUL £9.99
ODDWORLD ABES EXODDUS £9.99
ODDWORLD ABES ODDYSEE £9.99
OUTCAST £9.99
PGA CHAMPIONSHIP GOLF £9.99
POWERSLIDE £8.49
PREMIER MANAGER 98 £7.99
PRINCE OF PERSIA 3D £9.99
PRO GOLF 98 £9.99

TOP 10 BUDGET GAMES

1. UNREAL TOURNAMENT £9.99
2. DRIVER £9.99
3. DISCWORLD NOIR £9.99
4. COLIN McRAE RALLY £9.99
5. GTA 2 £9.99
6. NOMAD SOUL £9.99
7. URBAN CHAOS £9.99
8. BEETLE CRAZY CUP £9.99
9. SEGA RALLY 2 £9.99
10. DAIKATANA £9.99

PUZZLE BOBBLE £8.49
REDGUARD - ADVENTURES OF ELDAR SCROLLS £9.99
REQUIEM - AVENGING ANGEL £9.99
RETURN TO KRONDOR £9.99
SEGA RALLY 2 £9.99
SENSIBLE GOLF £8.99
SIM CITY CLASSIC £7.99
SIM CITY 2000 £9.99
SIN MISSION PACK £9.99
SINCLAIR ZX SPECCY EMULATOR £8.99
SOCCER LEGENDS - PREM MAN 3 & ACTUA SOCCER £8.99
SPACE QUEST 6 £7.99
SPORTS CAR GT £9.99
STREET FIGHTER 2 ALPHA £9.99
SU - 27 FLANKER £7.99
SUB WAR 2050 £4.99
SUPER MATCH SOCCER £8.99
SWAT 2 £9.99
TA KINGDOMS £9.99
THEME HOSPITAL CLASSIC £9.99
THEME PARK CLASSIC £9.99
TOTAL AIR WAR £9.99
TOTAL ANNIHILATION - BATTLE TACTICS £6.99
TRIVIAL PURSUIT £39.99
UEFA CHAMP. LEAGUE 2000 £9.99
ULTIMATE LEMMINGS £9.99
ULTIMATE SOCCER MANAGER 98 £9.99
UNREAL £9.99
UNREAL TOURNAMENT £9.99
UPRISING 2 LEAD & DESTROY £9.99
URBAN CHAOS £9.99
VIRTUAL SNOOKER £9.99
WARCRAFT 2 BATTLE.NET £9.99
WARGASM £9.99
WESTERN FRONT £9.99
WORLD RALLY FEVER £6.99
XENON 2 £4.99

How to turn a powerful, persuasive advertisement into wastepaper.

Your advertisement will hit the bin if it doesn't hit the target.

A publication with an ABC PROFILE will improve your aim.

No ABC. No guarantee.

Please send me more information about the ABC and its activities.

ABC
AUDIT BUREAU OF CIRCULATIONS
PROFILE

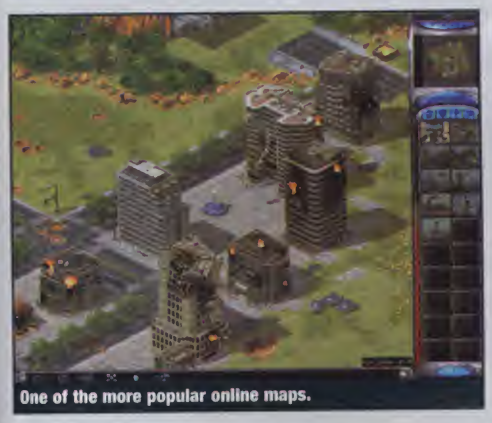
Name:
Position:
Company:
Address:

Tel:
Fax:

Audit Bureau of Circulations Limited.,
Black Prince Yard, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire HP4 1AD
Tel: 01442 870800 Fax: 01442 877407

Bloody nukes.

Have tanks, will travel.


One of the more popular online maps.

And it was all going so well.

Build, harvest, research, kill – ad infinitum.

COMMAND & CONQUER: RED ALERT 2 V1.002

PCZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

£34.99 • Electronic Arts • Out now

Old hand strategy meister *Richie Shoemaker* goes back to boot camp to brush up on his basic training

It's an unfortunate fact of online gaming life that the more popular a game is the better it will be. For instance, amazing as *Shogun: Total War* is as a single-player experience, as an online game it loses something almost intangible, and thanks to a few bugs, inherent lag-ridden play and a bunch of good-for-nothing cheats, the game has lost much of its online audience as a result.

Not so *Red Alert 2*, which like its predecessor, is one of the biggest real-time strategy games played online and off. It's easy to see why: not only is *C&C* itself a tag as popular in gaming circles as Westlife is in pap music (and infinitely more enduring), but the gameplay mechanics have changed little since Westwood single-handedly invented real-time strategy with *Dune 2*, back in 1993. It's a cinch to learn, runs on almost any PC and you don't have to fart about with IP addresses, obscure applications (to the simpleton anyway) like *GameSpy* or pay a monthly subscription. You just dial-in, click and play. Everything is navigated through the *RA2* menu system, you won't have problems finding people to play against, day or night and if you're new to the delights of online gaming, there is no better place to start.

RANKING FURIOUSLY

If you've played *Red Alert 2*'s Skirmish game, you won't have much of a problem with its Multiplayer. In fact, the only difference is that your opponents will be more vocal and varied in skill and predictability. Online, however, there is a ranking system in place. And, in theory, finding a like-skilled player to mouse-duel should be simple thanks to the fact you can click on their name and see at a glance where in the world they are from and how high they sit in the *RA2* rankings. In practice, rankings aren't that helpful and sometimes don't even show up. As a guide, lose your first tournament game and you'd probably go straight in at 40,000. Play someone ranked around 300 as I stupidly did (he was tagged as 'unranked' when I chose to play him) and you can expect a mauling. Still, the *RA2* community is a pretty friendly bunch, whether they win or lose, as long as the game is a good one there are plenty of virtual handshakes and cocktails by the pool afterwards.

> **"If you're new to the delights of online gaming, there is no better place to start"**

LIFE'S SIMPLE PLEASURES

One game not available to the skirmisher is World Domination. First introduced in last year's *C&C: Tiberian Sun* add-on *Firestorm*, it is essentially a series of linked missions set across Risk-like maps of Asia, America or Europe, depending on which server you are connected to at the time. You choose one of the contested territories, fight, and whether you win or lose, the overall map changes colour and, at the end of each day, a side is declared victorious. No big shakes really, but it's bizarre why you can only play Domination in 640 x 480 resolution.

So, little has changed then. Online *Red Alert 2* is just as good as all the other Westwood games have been since time began. It's not as good looking as many other RTS games we could mention, neither is it particularly the most strategically challenging game around. As long as you know each unit and every keyboard shortcut, you can pretty much rule the online roost. While you're there, however, *Red Alert 2* is a lot of fun, easy to play and unendingly popular – and if you've already got the game, it would be a crime not to bring your modem to the party.

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS Popular • Simple • Fast-paced

DOWNERS Maybe too simple

85 Sorted for ease of use

GAMES SERVER BROWSERS

SOFTWARE ROUND UP

Want to know where all the action is? See who's playing and how many frags they've racked up? *Phil Wand* discovers the tools to help you

Online multiplayer games are more popular than sex. Well, looking at the statistics, you'd certainly think so. Each night from dusk until dawn, tens of thousands of people pump away at the likes of *Unreal Tournament*, *Quake III Arena* and *Counter-Strike*, the servers they play on constantly sucking and squirting game data down phone lines. But finding the right game with the right people and the right level ain't so easy – stick to the Internet connection screens in *Half-Life* or *Quake III Arena* and you'll only see half the story, and only have half the fun. What you need is a dedicated server browser to make choosing, browsing, filtering and connecting simplicity itself.

REVIEWS

GAMESPY ARCADE BETA 8.0

Originally called QuakeSpy and developed as a freeware tool for QuakeWorld players, GameSpy has been in development longer than any other server browser. Curiously, its heritage doesn't show in GameSpy Arcade. Although much easier to grasp than its big brother, GameSpy 3D, the interface is needlessly perplexing alongside the likes of QTracker, and the whole package has become weighed down with eye candy and pointless features. Why integrate chat when everyone uses IRC instead? And why include instant messaging when there's already ICQ? Sadly, it all feels more like a vehicle for promoting the GameSpy name and not like the multipurpose tool it should be. If you want to dive in and get playing, this is not the way to do it.

Who: GameSpy Technologies
Where: www.gamespy.com
Pros: Omnipresent • Well supported • Chat and instant messaging
Cons: Unintuitive interface • Frivolous features • Bloatware
Cost: US$20
Score: ✪✪✪✪✪

HYDRA-SB 1.1

Take a look at the screenshot: enigmatic, this isn't. Hydra-SB's interface is plain puzzling, meaning first-time users will spend most of their time pointing, dragging, clicking and wondering. In fact, we were still doing that several hours after we first installed it. There's little logic to the way things are laid out, due to the developers' mistaken belief that being unusual excuses the fact that it's hopelessly unusable. Sure, it's quick, supports your fave games and the accompanying audio comprises *Beavis And Butthead* sound bites, but it's still got a long way to go.

Who: Red Mountain Software
Where: www.hydra-sb.com
Pros: Fast • Dares to be different
Cons: Unusable interface • Buggy • Website out of date
Cost: Free
Score: ✪✪✪✪✪

PINGTOOL 2.6A

We've said it before and we'll say it again: PingTool is the best server browser, bar none. Add in the fact that it's intuitive, laden with useful features and free, and it's a wonder people still choose to use GameSpy. Installation and setup is a snap, with the program searching for and presenting all your games in a logical manner. Press the green Go button and multiplayer servers for every game you have begin pouring in. Filters allow you to narrow down your criteria – for example, you can choose to only display *Counter-Strike* games running the infamous Militia map with at least 10 players in the game. It's also dead easy, using filters, to track down who's online. If you want to get straight into a game, there's no better way.

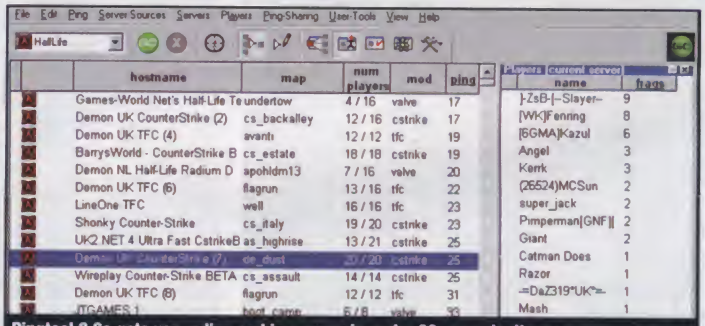
OUR CHOICE

Who: PingTool
Where: www.pingtool.com
Pros: Fast and easy install • Customisable • Fully featured • Free
Cons: Server list slow • Could do with an update
Cost: Free
Score: ✪✪✪✪✪

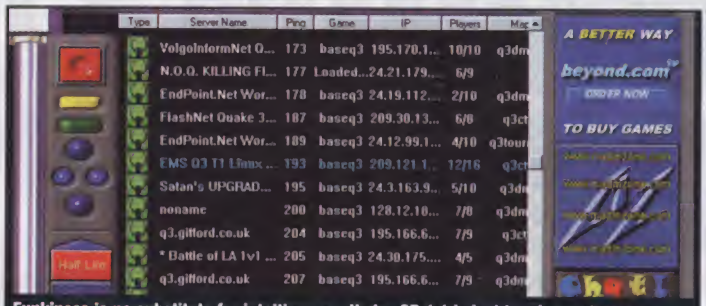
QTRACKER 2.3 BETA

As a pure server browser, QTracker is among the best. It's quick, easy to configure and doesn't come with any of the irrelevant paraphernalia that tends to bog down its rivals. Maintaining a list of favourite servers is a drag-and-drop dream, and information is displayed in a clear and concise manner. If it weren't for the fact that we couldn't get it to fetch *Half-Life* games from the master servers, no matter how much we tweaked and fiddled, it would have come close to deposing PingTool. We suspect that one day it will.

Who: Ronald E Mercer
Where: www.qtracker.com
Pros: Fast • Familiar look and feel • Constantly updated
Cons: Doesn't always work • Finding players requires an external program
Cost: US$20
Score: ✪✪✪✪✪

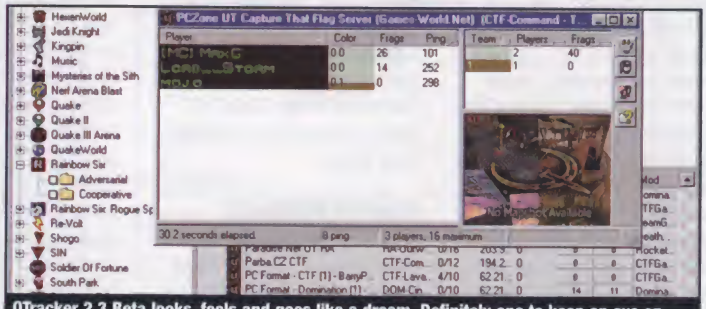


Pingtool 2.6a gets you online and in a game in under 30 seconds. Hooray.



Funkiness is no substitute for intuitiveness. Hydra-SB 1.1 is just too damn strange.

Too many bells and whistles makes Gamespy Arcade Beta 8.0 feel bloated.



QTracker 2.3 Beta looks, feels and goes like a dream. Definitely one to keep an eye on.

FORGET THE TURKEY GET SOME GAME THIS CHRISTMAS

COMMAND & CONQUER RED ALERT™ 2

COMBAT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2

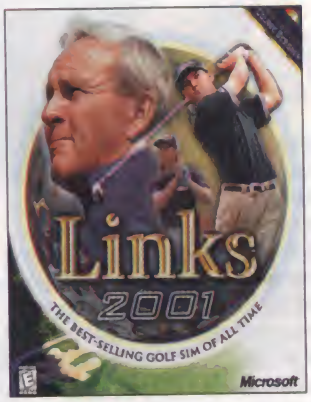
AGE OF EMPIRES II CONQUERORS
(EXPANSION PACK)

GUNMAN CHRONICLES

CALL TO POWER II

ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND

SACRIFICE



LINKS 2001

WHATEVER TURNS YOU ON

Virgin megastores

EA GAMES, the EA GAMES logo, Command & Conquer, Red Alert logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of Electronic Arts Inc. in the US and/or other countries.

HARDWARE

Hardwaring *Tim Ponting* puts the latest 3D accelerators head to head

HERCULES 3D PROPHET II ULTRA

£439 inc VAT • Guillemot • (020) 8686 5600 • www.hercules-uk.com

Ridiculously fast and somewhat overpriced.

AGP slots in shiny new motherboards have been quivering at the thought of having a next-gen NVIDIA card docked in their 4x glory hole. We've also been waiting with baited breath for the chip, codenamed NV20, originally expected this winter… but sadly, the wait continues. Any self-respecting slot will be happy with an Ultra, but it ain't no NV20, now delayed until spring next year.

As with its TNT2 chipset, NVIDIA has prolonged the life of its current generation GeForce2 by cranking up its components to meltdown point – a faster core with faster memory alongside it. The Ultra card reviewed here is basically a Prophet II GTS with go-faster stripes. But boy, what stripes.

The standard GTS has a core clocked at 200MHz and memory at 166MHz (333MHz with the Double Data Rate – DDR – taken into account). By moving to a 0.18 micron manufacturing process, NVIDIA has squeezed a 250MHz core with 230MHz memory (460MHz DDR). This, while hardly imaginative, is like popping lead piping in a boxing glove – what it lacks in subtlety it makes up for in brute force. Coupled with the Detonator 3 drivers, which have already given the GTS a lead over its newer, smarter competitors, Ultra is quite simply the fastest 3D card that money can buy. Albeit a lot of money.

Benchmarking this beast is staggering. With 16-bit colour depth, nothing else comes close. On my 1GHz Athlon, I managed to squeeze a frame rate of 45fps in 3DMark 2000 in the Adventure benchmark at high detail in 1,600 x 1,200. Some lesser cards don't even make single figures.

In *Quake III*, the Ultra simply goes bananas. *QIII* is a game that uses double textures, so the Ultra's quad-texture pipeline is used to its maximum capacity, pumping everything to the screen (er… two goes into four quite neatly). On a fast Athlon, you're talking the kind of numbers we used to pray for at 640 x 480: how does 83 frames per second in 16-bit colour at 1,600 x 1,200 grab you? Or a measly 105 frames per second in 32-bit colour at 1,024 x 768? Better still, for those who are happy at 8 x 6, you can actually run Full Screen Anti Aliasing (FSAA) and maintain acceptable frame rates. Personally, I think FSAA sucks, but there you go.

However, Ultra is most certainly not a 'next-next-generation' design; for this, you need to look at chipsets such as ATI's Radeon (reviewed opposite) for a feature set that will come into its own when triple-texture games becomes the norm (four pipelines aren't as efficient in this case). However, its raw power is undeniable, even in games that don't play to its strengths, such as *Unreal Tournament* or *Deus Ex*. And, if you believe the hype, as hardware transform and lighting functions are utilised properly by game developers, GeForce and other T&L cards will look even better.

For those of you into overclocking, the Prophet II Ultra is also a humdinger. Basically, because the parts that make it into the Ultra are the finest NVIDIA can lay its hands on, with a bit of luck you can clock the core to 285MHz or above and the memory to a full 250MHz – way above the basic GTS 166MHz – giving better bandwidth and ekeing even more frames from the monster. But just watch out for the heat – even the memory needs heatsinks!

Despite the brutishness of the Ultra, there are two massive concerns: the price, which is unlikely to drop rapidly as the memory costs so much, and the fact that NV20 is around the corner. Ultra may be the 'best', but it costs an arm and a leg, and its lead is likely to be short-lived. Unless you have a fast machine and habitually play games at high resolution, it's overkill for this dollar.

PCZ VERDICT 72%

ATI RADEON 64MB DDR

£299 inc VAT • ATI Technologies • (01628) 477 788 • www.ati.com

Everyone loves the underdog. When NVIDIA crept up from behind the behemoth 3dfx and rabbit-punched it, how we all hooted. ATI, once the glory boy, has proffered decent-value mainstream 3D cards using the Rage Pro chipset. This was popular for its great DVD performance, but loathed for a succession of driver howlers that made certain 'games of the day' unplayable (I actually struggled through *Jedi Knight* with a Rage Pro, and it wasn't funny).

Radeon, on paper at least, is by far the most advanced graphics card on sale. The Rage6C core has more transistors (phwoar), just dual pipelines but with three texture units each, a better hardware T&L engine and Hyper-Z Z-Buffer optimisation.

OK, so what does this mean in real life? ATI reckons triple will take over from double-texture usage (a dubious prediction according to id's John Carmack); its hardware T&L supports 'vertex skinning' among other things (again a future benefit); and Hyper-Z allows more complex scenes to be drawn before the memory bandwidth is flooded (because it avoids calculating everything about polygons that aren't actually drawn as they're obscured behind others). Phew.

However, when you start benchmarking Radeon, the benefits become clear, even with present generation games. I actually tested it first against a 64Mb GeForce GTS card – pre-Detonator 3 drivers – and it more than held its own at 32-bit colour depth, bettering NVIDIA's offering in higher resolutions. In 16-bit, Radeon sucks, but then ATI never optimised it for the lower colour depth.

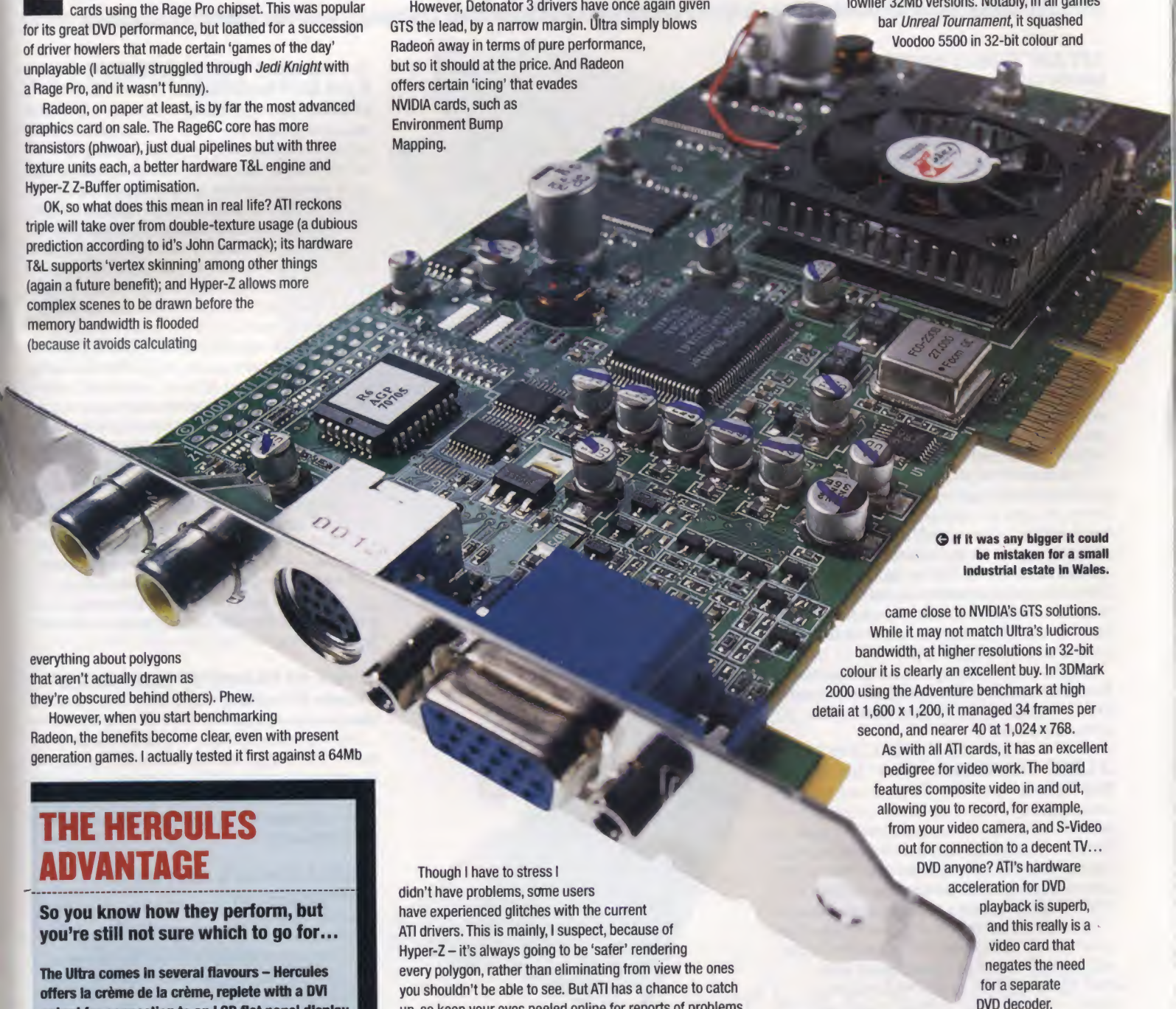
However, Detonator 3 drivers have once again given GTS the lead, by a narrow margin. Ultra simply blows Radeon away in terms of pure performance, but so it should at the price. And Radeon offers certain 'icing' that evades NVIDIA cards, such as Environment Bump Mapping.

Though I have to stress I didn't have problems, some users have experienced glitches with the current ATI drivers. This is mainly, I suspect, because of Hyper-Z – it's always going to be 'safer' rendering every polygon, rather than eliminating from view the ones you shouldn't be able to see. But ATI has a chance to catch up, so keep your eyes peeled online for reports of problems being cleared up.

Remarkably, Radeon achieves its performance from relatively humble clock speeds in both the core and memory: the former at 183MHz, the latter also at 183MHZ (366MHz DDR). This suggests that at a later stage, the promised Radeon Maxx with faster components will begin to outshine lowlier NVIDIA offerings such as the GTS, just at the time games may start to use its feature set. Interestingly, the processor clearly doesn't run too hot – the fan assembly had fallen off our review model, and I ran a test routine for 12.5 hours with the fan held on by an elastic band without it overheating!

In benchmarking, Radeon behaved and performed well – we tested the 64Mb DDR card, rather than either of the lowlier 32Mb versions. Notably, in all games bar *Unreal Tournament*, it squashed Voodoo 5500 in 32-bit colour and came close to NVIDIA's GTS solutions. While it may not match Ultra's ludicrous bandwidth, at higher resolutions in 32-bit colour it is clearly an excellent buy. In 3DMark 2000 using the Adventure benchmark at high detail at 1,600 x 1,200, it managed 34 frames per second, and nearer 40 at 1,024 x 768.

As with all ATI cards, it has an excellent pedigree for video work. The board features composite video in and out, allowing you to record, for example, from your video camera, and S-Video out for connection to a decent TV... DVD anyone? ATI's hardware acceleration for DVD playback is superb, and this really is a video card that negates the need for a separate DVD decoder.



If it was any bigger it could be mistaken for a small industrial estate in Wales.

We started with the parable of the underdog, and ATI has certainly put a cat among the pigeons. However, with Detonator 3 screwing up comparisons with the GeForce GTS, Radeon has a short way to go to steal NVIDIA's crown.

If prices drop, or it speeds up the core and upgrades the memory spec, Radeon could make best buy. But until that happens, the GTS just about holds onto the lead.

PCZ VERDICT 80%

THE HERCULES ADVANTAGE

So you know how they perform, but you're still not sure which to go for...

The Ultra comes in several flavours – Hercules offers la crème de la crème, replete with a DVI output for connection to an LCD flat panel display (you have got one, haven't you?) and an S-Video connector for output to a decent TV.

While NVIDIA isn't as well known as ATI for DVD playback, GeForce's credentials are excellent, with hardware motion compensation taking a major strain off the CPU.

However, if you want to capture video, you'll need to take a walk on the ATI side – the Radeon All-In-Wonder Pro even has a TV tuner built in!

Dear Santa ALL I WANT FOR

Just slip this spread in front of your partner about two weeks before Christmas and you could be laughing.

1 IT AIN'T HALF HOT, MUM

Abit KT-7 RAID motherboard

www.abit.nl/english/

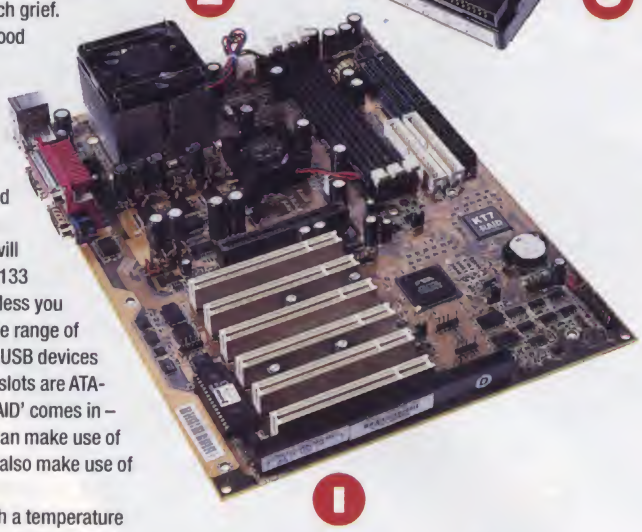
Most of the time, upgrading your motherboard and processor involves junking half the components in your PC – they're too old, too slow and often just incompatible. Last time around, half of us had to junk our 66MHz memory in favour of PC100 sticks and cough up for a new graphics card.

Funnily enough, provided you do have PC100 memory – and if you've got a fast Pentium II or slow PIII or Athlon, the chances are you have – you can actually upgrade your motherboard and processor without much grief.

After much gnashing of teeth and a good deal of research, we've picked out the fabulous Abit KT-7 RAID motherboard for you. You can snap it up from online resellers for around £135, which may sound like a lot, but before the next-generation boards come in, this is as good as it gets for Athlon Socket A processors.

Why? First of all, for its versatility. It will take PC100 and the marginally faster PC133 memory (the latter isn't worth buying unless you have to get new memory anyway), a huge range of AMD processors and can host up to four USB devices and eight EIDE drives. The extra two IDE slots are ATA-100 specification, which is where the 'RAID' comes in – the hard drive upgrade suggested here can make use of this faster performance, though you can also make use of slower drives in these slots as well.

The BIOS is eminently tweakable, with a temperature thermostat underneath the processor to monitor whether your overclocking (ahem) activities are about to prove an expensive mistake.



2 LIVE GIGGING

1GHz Athlon Socket A CPU

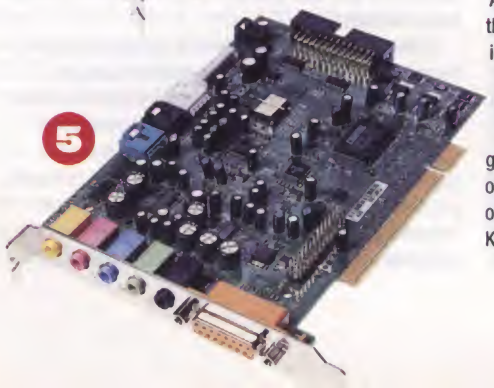
www.amd.com

Married to mother is a 1GHz Athlon Socket A processor. For around £250 at time of writing, it will make your PC fly. I've been wedded blissfully to my Slot A Athlon 600 for the last year, but advances in manufacturing allow 1GHz (1,000MHz) performance at a bargain basement price.

Athlon architecture includes plenty of on-chip memory: Level 1 features 128K coupled with 256K of Level 2 cache. AMD's 3DNow! instruction set speeds games, while Athlon's amazing 'floating point' performance allows complex mathematical calculations to be performed without breaking into a sweat, it also helps AMD clinch the gamer's crown.

Just a couple of caveats: Athlons run very hot, so make sure you fit an approved fan, and these processors like a meaty power supply to be fitted in your computer case. Check the AMD website carefully for approved units and, if in doubt, make sure yours is rated at 300W. Cheaper 230 or 250W units will simply give up the ghost.

And no, AMD doesn't have shares in PSU companies – as far as I know!



3 YOU CAN'T GET SACKED FOR BUYING IBM

IBM Deskstar 75GXP 30Mb

www.storage.ibm.com

Gamers tend to think of hard drives solely in terms of capacity – not surprising when today's games occupy more space than Vanessa Feltz's bottom. I blanched when I realised recently that *Microsoft Combat Flight Sim 2* packed a full gigabyte on my increasingly decreasing hard drive.

Picking the best hard drive is a difficult task given the array of options. In the old days, you'd pick a drive with a large memory cache, fast rotational speed (ideally 5,400 RPM or above) and a decent seek time. In practice, it's not that simple. Quantum has made a song and dance about how unimportant rotational speed is in day-to-day use, and there are other factors to take into account, such as reliability and temperature. Modern drives run very hot and, in my experience, they don't last anywhere near as long as older drives which are cooler and less mechanically intensive.

After deep thought, we picked out the IBM Deskstar 75GXP in 30Gb capacity. It's a 7,200 RPM beast, supports ATA-100 (so it fits nicely into the Abit KT-7 RAID motherboard), and has an excellent 8.5ms seek time. Sorry, a woman's just won a million quid on *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire*... Where was I? Oh yes, hard drives. Couple this performance with the fact that IBM drives are well known for reliability – I've had a few that have outlived many others – and it's a winner. And when a journalist buys something for around £135, you know it's good – the one in the photo is mine.

4 THE 12 TASKS OF HERCULES

Hercules 3D Prophet II Ultra

www.hercules-uk.com

...Or perhaps rather more than 12, given the number of tasks a modern 3D graphics processor has to cope with. I won't labour the point as it's reviewed on the previous page, but if money is no object, this is currently the fastest gamer's card on offer. If your mum just won a million quid, it's the obvious choice.

5 HELL KNOWS NO FURY...

VideoLogic SonicFury

www.videologic.co.uk

Reviewed in issue #96 of *PC ZONE*, the SonicFury has stolen Creative Labs' crown when it comes to *the* sound card for gamers – just. Its strength lies in the multipurpose Crystal SoundFusion DSP chip at the heart of the card. As it is reconfigurable via software drivers, depending on the task demanded of it, new drivers can potentially improve its performance over time – for example, as new versions of DirectX are released. The first release accelerates a staggering 96 streams of DirectSound 3D, more than enough for even the most sonically demanding games such as *Unreal Tournament* – and for around £76 on the street. We're duty bound to tell you we've had the odd problem with the card since the review in an older AMD K6-3 based machine, but in this context it's a winner.

CHRISTMAS...

Come sit on *Tim Ponting*'s knee as he yo-ho-hos his way through the ultimate Christmas PC upgrades

6 MR BOOMBASTIC WOOFER FANTASTIC

VideoLogic Scirocco Crossfire

www.videologic.co.uk

They may not be the newest kid on the block, but for 4.1 (four surround-sound channels plus a meaty subwoofer), the Crossfires are unbeatable at around £195 from online vendors. Now rejuvenated by new cones in its satellites, its 100W RMS performance will part your hair and flap your trouser legs more effectively than a comb and a Chihuahua respectively.

7 ONE SIZE FITS ALL

Saitek Cyborg 3D Gold

www.saitek.co.uk

For many, force feedback technology isn't all it's cracked up to be. While Microsoft's Sidewinder ForceFeedback 2 is clearly the best example on sale, the results seem unpredictable in a variety of games. For this reason, we choose the keenly priced, non-force feedback Saitek Cyborg 3D Gold, which is a superb product at a great price: under £45 if you hunt around. It's totally adjustable for left handers, big handers and even cack handers, comes with a great software utility and is head and shoulders above the competition.

8 PADDING IT OUT

Microsoft Sidewinder GamePad Pro

www.microsoft.com/sidewinder

The latest in a long line of great controllers, this tasteful silver boomerang looks like a Klingon weapon and quite possibly might help you wield a virtual one more accurately. Sidewinder pads have always been great, and this is no exception. Available for a street price of around £26.

9 CUT-THROAT RAZER

Razer Boomslang 2000

www.razerzone.com

While a mouse isn't exactly the first thing that springs to mind for gamers, this esoteric product has made waves overseas where it has become a firm favourite among the *Quake* elite. Now picked up by Labtec, it should be in stores near you soon (price to be confirmed). A 2000dpi device (most mice offer a resolution of around 400dpi), it allows pinpoint accuracy in first-person shooters. Just don't use it for word processing – your hand will fall off with the strain.

10 FLATTER THAN ESSEX

Everglide Giganta mouse pad

www.everglide.co.uk

A simple product: slightly rippled with a flat underside. Indescribably boring but used by all staff on *PC ZONE* during intensive *CounterStrike* sessions. Perfect for head shots. Only £15.99. Nuff said.

11 SPEEDY DVD

Guillemot Maxi DVD-ROM 12x

www.guillemot.co.uk

Guillemot has offered great DVD-ROM packages for a while, sourcing ever faster drives from Toshiba over time: in this case, the 12x SD-M1402. We've had no problems with Tosh drives over the years, it's multi-region if you prefer to watch foreign disks, 40x reading CDs, and Guillemot also bundles a full version of Cyberlink's PowerDVD to boot. Its RRP is £120, so shop around and you'll get a bargain.

12 REWRITING HISTORY

Sony CRX160E-RP CD-RW Kit

www.sony-cp.com/cd-rw

With all the hard drive space in the world, you're bound to run out at some stage. Being able to burn your own CDs is a great form of backup – especially for a gigantic MP3 collection. Sony's super-fast CRX160E, RRP £210, offers 12x writing, 8x rewriting and 32x reading CDs. It also comes with a generous software bundle for the discerning MP3 abuser.

Thanks fatso.
Love, me!
XXX

'A RACING GAME ON A SCALE NEVER SEEN BEFORE. INCREDIBLE STUFF'
- 9/10 OFFICIAL DREAMCAST MAGAZINE

IT'S NOT HOW FAST YOU DRIVE...

IT'S HOW YOU

'WE'RE STARING INTO THE HEADLIGHTS OF A MODERN CLASSIC. RESPECT DUE' - DC:UK
'THIS IS A DREAM' - MAXIM

DRIVE FAST!

MSR™
METROPOLIS STREET RACER

BIZARRE CREATIONS

Dreamcast

SEGA

Sega & Dreamcast are either trademarks or registered trademarks of Sega Enterprises Ltd. Copyright Sega Enterprises Ltd 2000

TROUBLESHOOTER

IT'S YOUR SHOUT

RINGING IN THE CHANGES Martin Korda

As I said last month, this section isn't always as exciting as it could be. Which is why I'm currently putting together ideas for how to liven things up a little. However, as far as I'm concerned, this is your mag. You buy it, you read it and you support it, and so quite frankly, you deserve a say in what goes in. *PC ZONE* has always been a magazine for the readers, and it always will be. So here's your chance. I want to hear your ideas, I want to know what you really want to see in Troubleshooter in the future? If enough of you write in asking for the same kind of thing, then rest assured, I will make sure we act on your requests. I've already got some things planned, but with your help we can turn these pages into a section where you can all find something that interests or entertains you. Please feel free to send your thoughts marked Troubleshooter Ideas to: **letters@pczone.co.uk**. I'm looking forward to reading your suggestions and opinions.

IN TRUBS THIS MONTH...

124 CHEAT MASTER
The grand wizard of all things cheat-like, Mr Keith Pullin, bares his soul and reveals some sneaky little manoeuvres.

125 DEAR KEITH
Filled with frustration and game-related woes? Uncle Keith lends a helping hand.

126 DIABLO II WALKTHROUGH – PART TWO
Keith Pullin takes you by the hand and guides you through the maze that is *Diablo II*.

132 DEAR WANDY
Need to find a solution to a niggling technical pain? Our resident techie Wandy is here to help.

134 WATCHDOG
Have you got a gripe with the industry? Then allow the consumers' champion Adam Phillips to track down some answers...

YOUR HOSTS

Adam Phillips

Keith Pullin

James Lyon

CHEAT MASTER

No need to get the blues. With the cheatmaster, you'll never lose

CHIEF CHEAT MASTER Keith Pullin

If your problems persist, you can solve them if you...

WRITE TO **Dear Keith/Cheat Master, *PC ZONE*, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF**

EMAIL **letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk** with **Dear Keith** or **Cheat Master** in the subject line.

MIDTOWN MADNESS 2
Microsoft

Cheats or Easter eggs? We're not sure. Anyway, it's fun deciding for yourselves.

• To get a spanking new alternative Mini Cooper, finish in first, second or third place in five London Blitz races. If playing in professional mode, you need to finish first in every race.

• If you finish in first, second, or third place in six London Checkpoint races, you can select a Panoz GTR-1. Again, in professional mode you need to come out on top in all six Checkpoint races.

• For a gorgeous James Bond-style Aston Martin DB7 Vantage, finish the London Crash course in first place.

• Finish in first, second or third place in five San Francisco Circuit races for an alternate Beetle Dune. Once again, you need to finish in first place if in professional mode.

• When you finish in first, second or third place in five San Francisco Blitz races, you get the American Lafrance fire truck. Remember: first place if in professional mode.

• You can get an Audi TT if you finish in first, second or third place in six San Francisco Checkpoint races. Professional mode? First place, of course...

• For an alternative Beetle Rsi, finish the San Francisco Crash course in first place.

RUNE
Take 2 Interactive

During the game, activate the console with the ~ (tilde) key and type:

CHEATPLEASE	Enable cheat mode
GOD	God mode
GHOST	No clipping
FLY	Fly mode
WALK	Fly mode off
SUMMON [x]	Summon item (where x is item, see list)
SWITCHCOOPLEVEL [x]	Jump to map [x] with all the items you need (see list)
OPEN [x]	Jump to map [x] (see list)

List of Items

VikingShortSword	VikingBroadSword
VikingShield	VikingShieldCross
GoblinAxe	GoblinShield
RuneOfHealth	RuneOfPowerRefill
RuneOfPower	RuneOfStrength
SigurdAxe	DarkShield
MagicShield	RustyMace
RomanSword	HandAxe
DwarfBattleShield	DwarfBattleSword
	DwarfBattleAxe
	DwarfWorkHammer
	DwarfBattleHammer

List of Maps

intro	ragnarvillage
ragnarvillage2	sailingship
sinkingship	sinkingship2
deepunder1odin	deepunder3
deepunder1odinbv	deepunder4
hel1	hel1a
hel1a2	hel1b
hell2end	hel3a
hel3b	hellift
goblin1	goblin2
trialpit	beetlefly
thorapproach	thor1
thormap3	thormap4a
thormap4b	thormap5a
thormap5b	thormap6loki
mountain1	mountain2
dwarftrans	dwarf1wwheel
dwarfmap2	dwarfmap3a
dwarfmap3b	dwarfmap5a
dwarfmap6	darkdwarf
dwarfmap5b	loki1
loki1a	lokimaze
loki2	loki3a
loki3b	villageruin
asgard (end movie)	

PLAYERSONLY	Freezes enemies
KILLPAWNS	Kills all enemies
PREFERENCES	Advanced options
TOGGLEFULLSCREEN	Full-screen mode On/Off

Don't worry, this won't hurt a bit.

BALDUR'S GATE II
Interplay

Open the Baldur.ini file with Notepad or some other kind of editing package. Look for a heading called [Program Options]. Beneath this type: 'Debug Mode=1', then save and exit. Now start the game as normal and press 'Ctrl' and 'Space' to activate the console. Enter any of the following cheats:

List of Creatures

Dragred	Red dragon
dragblac	Black dragon
dragsilv	Silver dragon
demnabo1	Nabassu

STUPID COMPETITION

Where cheating and pointlessness are qualities to be admired

So, you fancy yourself as a bit of a cheatmaster, do you? Well, here's your chance to prove it. For the next few months (and even longer if you're lucky), we're going to be running a Stupid Compo. All you have to do to enter is send us your most ridiculous and pointless cheats. If we think your cheat is stupid enough, we'll not only print it and your name, we'll also send you the most ridiculous prize we can find in the *PC ZONE* prize cupboard. What more incentive do you need?

Please send your cheats, a brief description of what they (allegedly) do, along with your name and address, to letters@pczone.co.uk. **Entitle your emails Stupid Compo and make sure to include all your correct details, so if you do win, we know where to send your prize.**

Congratulations to this month's winner, who is D. Maskel of Surrey, whose cheat for *Midtown Madness* makes your horn fire letter boxes. This totally pointless action is done by holding down 'Ctrl, Alt, Shift' and 'F7' and then entering '/postal' in the box that appears. Pictured, left, is this month's fantastic prize – a beautiful pair of purple Y-fronts that we found festering in a ditch in Epping forest. Well done.

dempi01 Pit fiend
uddeath Demon knight
CreateCreature(x) Create creature (where x is creature, see list)
MoveToArea(x) Teleport to new area (where x is area to move to, see list)

List of Items

chan06 Drizzt's +4 Chainmail
leat08 Studded Leather +3:Shadow Armour
plat05 Full Plate +1
helm04 Helm of Defence
shld04 Medium Shield +1
shld06 Large Shield +1
ring07 Ring of Protection +2
ring08 Ring of Wizardry
brac14 Bracers of Defence AC 4
clck02 Cloak of Protection +2
belt06 Girdle of Hill Giant Strength
boot01 Boots of Speed
staf08 Martial Staff +3
hamm08 War Hammer +2
sw1h09 Short Sword +2
sw1h40 Blade of Roses (Longsword +3 +2 Charisma)
sw1h49 Ninja-To +1
sw2h09 Warblade (2-H sword +4)
bow18 Shortbow +2
bow17 Longbow +2
sing03 Sling +3
ax1h03 Battle Axe +2
halb03 Halberd +2

List of Areas

AR0900 Temple District
AR0800 Graveyard District
AR0400 Slums District
AR0700 Waukeens Promenade
AR1000 Government District
AR0500 Bridge District
AR0300 Docks District
AR0020 City Gates
AR1100 Umar Hills
AR2500 Suldanesslar
AR2900 The Nine Hells
AR1201 Domain of the Dragon
AR1512 Asylum Dungeon
AR0801 Bodhis Dungeon
AR0516 Astral Prison
AR0411 Planar Sphere
AR0202 Cult of the Unseeing Eye
AR0204 Rift Dungeon
AR0414 Demon Outerworld
AR1300 De'Arnise Hold
AR2000 Trademeet
AR1900 Druids Grove
CLUAConsole:SetCurrentXP(x) Extra experience (where x is number of experience points)
CLUAConsole:AddGold(x) Extra gold (where x is amount of gold)
CLUAConsole:CreateItem(x,y) Create item (where x is item and y is amount, see list)

BLAIR WITCH PROJECT VOLUME 1: RUSTIN PARR

Take 2 Interactive

While playing, hit F10 and type in one of these ghoulish treats:

iworkforgod Invincibility
nod3d Invisibility
getintomybelly All weapons
mediumrare Crossbow
bigstickofdeath Shotgun
meetmypaltommy Tommygun
smileynomore Elephant gun
burnyourassoff Flamethrower
goodtimesman Dynamite
iamawimpforthis 100 bullets
wwbeware Silver bullets
vampbeware Lith bullets
demonbeware Mercy bullets
flameonastick Flaming ammunition
sunofgod Charge radiance emitter
recharge Recharge flashlight battery
icansee Night vision goggles
thedogfarted Gas mask
givemefaith Replenish health
hellfreezeover Disable enemy AI
combatisscary Easy combat
isuck Easy difficulty
puzzlesarescary Easy puzzles
irule Hard difficulty
thunderstorm Raining
snowstorm Snowing
time Slow down or speed up time
blank Weird colour scheme
dark Darker graphics
itisdarknow Darker colour scheme
instantcrash Crash game (why?)

Extra Hints

To hear the recorded forest noises, adjust the tape recorder to:
Bass 5, Treb 3, Freq 2, Pitch 5, Rev
To hear Mary Brown's voice on the tape recorder, make these adjustments:
Bass 1, Treb 4, Freq 2, Pitch 3, Forward

PHONE FOR HELP

Having trouble with a game and can't wait to see a reply in these pages? Then you need to check out...

THE *PC ZONE* TIPS HELPLINE ON

0906 466 4475

OPEN SEVEN DAYS A WEEK, 8AM-11PM

On the rare occasion that they can't help, your query will be passed on to a support team who guarantee to find you an answer within 24 hours.

• Calls cost £1.50 per minute at all times. Charges will appear on your standard telephone bill. If you do not pay the bill yourself, seek permission from whoever does pay it before calling.
If you have any problems, please call customer services on
0870 800 6155

DEAR KEITH

When it all gets too much, *Keith Pullin* is the man to turn to

MONKEYING AROUND

Q I am having trouble with *Monkey Island*. I have sunk my ship with the rock catapult device, and now I assume I have to get the rope from the hanging corpse so that I can climb down the ravine to get the oars. Thing is, I have absolutely no idea how to do this. Also, I don't know what to do with the monkey. Any help would be much appreciated.

Daniel, email

A You need to go to the fort and collect the spyglass and the rope. When you've got those two items, move the cannon, then pick up the gunpowder and the cannonball. Now go to the east fork, pick up the notable rock and go to the dam. Place the gunpowder in the dam and use the notable rock on the cannonball. When you get to the corpse, take his rope, go down the crack, use his rope to climb down, and then use other rope to climb down further. Pick up the oars and climb back up. As for the monkey? Give him bananas, of course.

TORMENTED

Q I'm playing *Planescape:Torment* at the moment and am stuck in the Prison section. I have killed all the guards so far, I have the finger bone key, but the door to the Inner Ring will not open, nor will the northeastern door. I read a walkthrough that said all I needed was the finger bone key, but it will not work. Help!

Ian Cairns, Hertfordshire

A Hmm. Bit of a tricky one this. The only thing I can think of is that you haven't asked Cassius for a challenge of strength. At this point he either flees or you can kill him, but whatever happens, a bloke called Trias is freed which opens the door you need to go through. Try that – hope it works.

DESPERATE

Q I have nearly completed *Shadowman*, but please, oh please, can you tell me how to get to the fourth Engine Console room? I have defeated all three serial killers, collected the three prisms and headed through the third Sole Gate, only to reach a dead end. What do I do now? I'm going batty with curiosity.

Sue, email

A Ah. I'm not sure whether I can help directly, but I can certainly give you a cheat that should solve your desperate problem. Under the installed folder in the path DATA\SCRIPTS\MENUS\ENGLISH there are three files: E3.MSC, DEBUG.MSC and RELEASE.MSC. Rename RELEASE.MSC to something like CHEAT.MEN, and then copy DEBUG.MSC to RELEASE.MSC in the same folder. Now, start the game and you should see a cheat menu that allows you to skip levels.

HEARING VOICES

Q What am I supposed to do on the tape recording bit of *Blair Witch Project Volume 1: Rustin Parr*? I've fiddled with those knobs for ages and nothing seems to happen. Do I need some kind of special mouse? Please help me solve it.

Vic George, Warminster

A Aaaargh! How many of you are asking about this section of the game? Just take a look at this month's Cheatmaster section above to find the solution for both tape recorder puzzles. Now, enough...

DIABLO II

STRATEGY GUIDE & WALKTHROUGH – PART TWO

***Keith Pullin* reveals the path to Diablo and much more besides in this, the last part of our *Diablo II* guide**

REVIEWED PCZ #93 **SCORE** 72%

THE GOLDEN BIRD

Ormus is the main man in the Dock area.

In this strategy guide we tell you the quickest way to progress through each quest, as well as a list of the major monsters you will face on the way. We also include a detailed look at each character class and the special moves and spells associated with them. To polish things off there's a quick guide to the items you can find in the game and *that* cheat. So, let's get on with it...

ACT III: THE INFERNAL GATE

Kurast Docks is the home of these helpful characters:
Alkor Potions for sale.
Asheara Offers the help of level 15-26 mages for between 600-1285 gold.
Deckard Cain The omnipresent Cain identifies your magic items.
Hralti Has a plentiful supply of armour and weapons. Also good for repairs.
Ormus As well as offering health potions, Ormus restores your health and mana.
Meshif Takes you back west.
Natalya Strange old woman with the odd bit of gossip.

Quest 1: The Golden Bird

As soon as you venture out of the safety of the town, the first unique monster you kill drops a Jade Figurine. Take it back to Meshif and he gives you the Golden Bird. Wander over to Alkor and give the Golden Bird to him. Now return to Meshif for an excellent potion that increases your life points by 20. That's it – the first quest is complete. See, things aren't so bad here, are they?

The jungle surrounding Kurast should be traversed carefully.

Quest 2: Blade Of The Old Religion

As you venture through the extremely tricky Flayer Jungle you come across a Pygmy village. Within this village there is a Pygmy Shaman who holds the

BLADE OF THE OLD RELIGION

Larger enemies tend to be strong in attack, but weak in defence.

Gidbinn Dagger. Kill him to get the dagger and then take it back to Ormus at Kurast Docks. He rewards you with a randomly generated Magic Ring.

You can now visit Asheara who offers the services of her mercenaries. Generally speaking, it's the mages with cold spells that are the most effective; their ability to freeze enemies is invaluable at this point in the game.

These red flies sap your stamina.

Quest 3: Khalim's Will

After completing Quest 2, talk to Cain to get the details for Quest 3.

You can find Khalim's Eye in the Spider Cavern in the Spider Forest. Make sure you have resistance to fire before you go after it though, because Sszark The Burning can be very hot to handle.

Khalim's Brain is guarded by Witch Doctor Endugu on the third level of the Flayer Dungeon. He shouldn't put up much of a fight providing you go in hard and fast. The third body part, the Heart, can be found in the sewers on level two.

The Flail is in Travincal, but beware, it is extremely difficult to get hold of. Ismail Vilehand is the Council Member you need to beat, and the best way to do this is tempt him out into the open and get your hired mage to blast him with cold spells. Once you've got the Flail put it in the Horadric Cube with all the body parts and transmute the contents into Khalim's Will.

Don't ever be afraid to run away.

Poison or freeze Ismail to make life much easier.

Quest 4: Lam Esen's Tome

Talk to Alkor to find out details of this quest. Go through Upper Kurast, the Bazaar and the Causeway. The Ruined Temple is found by clicking on a set of steps leading down. The only way to find the steps is by experimenting.

Once inside the Temple you need to kill Battlemaid Sarina to get the Tome. As long as you keep topping up on potions during the bout you shouldn't really have too many problems with her. With the Tome in your inventory head back to Alkor for a reward of five extra attribute points.

It's worth mentioning that you don't actually have to complete this quest to continue, but hey, five extra attribute points shouldn't be sniffed at.

Just one of the many sub-bosses you encounter.

Quest 5: The Blackened Temple

This is probably one of the most straightforward quests – you can't

WHO WANTS TO LIVE FOREVER?

If you don't already know this cheat, it's a miracle you've got this far. Anyway, for those remaining honest few, here you go.

When you die press 'Esc' to restart, and then press 'Esc' again, save the game and exit. Load that character again and your old corpse reappears on the floor in front of you with all the stuff you were carrying. Now, just left-click on your corpse to re-equip. Sadly, any gold you collected will still be gone, but hey, you can't have everything.

Death doesn't necessarily mean the end...

As if by magic your corpse rises from the ashes.

RANDOM MAGIC

One of the most amazing things about *Diablo II* is the amount of items available. Two people playing the same game would probably end it with totally different weapons, armour, rings, amulets or whatever. This is due to the incredible complexity of the make-up of each item.

Of course, we wouldn't dare list all of the items in the game right here, six pages simply isn't enough space. What we can do however, is give you a brief idea of what the colour codes for all the items are:

Green (extremely rare)	Part of a set
Gold (very rare)	Unique
Yellow (rare)	Valuable
Blue (quite common)	Magic
Grey (occasional)	Socketed
White (common)	Standard

White items are the most common item in the game.

Green items are extremely rare and of immense help to you.

let the games begin

FREE INTERNET ACCESS

Playing on the gameplay site costs nothing. It's fun and it's easy to get started. We'll give you all the help you need to get to the widest range of games and clubs on the web.
Get into gameplay, now. And play.
www.gameplay.com/wireplay

gameplay
THE GATEWAY TO GAMES

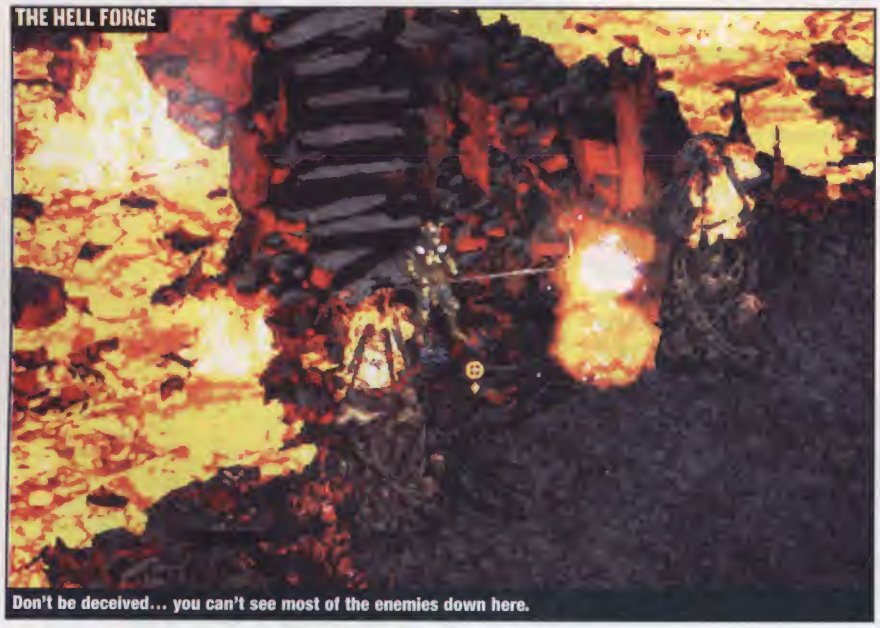
THE GUARDIAN

To beat Mephisto you need to get in nice and close.

THE FALLEN ANGEL

Prepare thyself for carnage.

THE HELL FORGE



Don't be deceived... you can't see most of the enemies down here.

go wrong really. Once you've created Khalim's Will, return to Travincal and kill the rest of the Council Members. Once done, smash the Compelling Orb with Khalim's Will to reveal the stairway to the Durance of Hate. Before going down, return to Ormus and Cain for some words of advice.

The Compelling Orb – last stop before the Durance of Hate.

Quest 6: The Guardian

Wander down into the Durance of Hate. Edge your way through carefully. Try and find the waypoint on level two because chances are you'll be using it regularly. Before you reach Mephisto on level three, you'll be assaulted by dozens of Blood Lords and Council Members. Take it slowly – they're deadly.

Once again, we cannot emphasize enough the importance of a cold spell-wielding mage at this point. Resistance to fire also helps. When you finally reach Mephisto he is surprisingly easy to defeat; most characters can rush in and hammer him to death at close quarters. After his spectacular death he drops his Soulstone and a unique or rare magical item.

And that's it for Act III. All you need to do now is go through the red portal and enter the final harrowing act...

A mage mercenary covers your ass as you replenish your health.

ACT IV: THE HARROWING

There are only a few friendly NPCs in the Pandemonium Fortress:

Deckard Cain Is there no stopping this man?

Halbu Your handy weapon and armour selling chap.

Jamella Scrolls, potions, weapons, armour... you name it – she's got it.

Tyrael Reckons he can offer you advice. In fact, he's full of it...

Quest 1: The Fallen Angel

When you first arrive in the fortress, have a chat with Tyrael. He'll tell you the terribly sad story of Izual, and how he needs to be free from his torment. Fine. Head into the Plains of Despair and find Izual on his lonely patrol. Use ranged attacks to kill him and providing you remain patient, he shouldn't be too difficult to defeat. When you kill him you get two extra skill points to play around with. Nice.

Yeah, yeah – just show me where he is...

Bang goes Izual's tortured spirit.

Quest 2: The Hellforge

The Hellforge is in the River of Flame, which can be found near the bottom of the staircase that leads out of the City of the Damned. To get the Hellforge Hammer kill Hephasto. When you have the hammer, equip it and click on the forge to smash Mephisto's Soulstone. You get loads of lovely gems for doing this, so if you want to make a useful socketed item, now is the time to do it. Our advice is to create something that gives fire protection, or something that inflicts cold damage.

Speak with Tyrael for some final words of advice on how to deal with Mr Diablo himself.

An ally? Down here? Surely not.

Quest 3: Terror's End

Go back to the River of Flame and hack your way through to the final waypoint. Keep going and when you get to the Chaos Sanctuary don't be scared of retreating when you are faced with hordes of enemies. Ultimately you need to open

the five seals to make him appear, unfortunately three of the five seals contain unique monsters, namely the Grand Vizier of Chaos, Lord De Seis and the Infector of Souls.

Diablo himself is like nothing you've ever seen and the strategy for defeating him depends a lot on which character you are. However, it goes without saying that no matter who you are, you should be topped up with health, mana and rejuvenation potions.

More specifically, those playing as the Sorceress should have the easiest time of it. She can destroy Diablo fairly quickly providing she has the right skills. By far the best combination is to use the Meteor skill plus Static Field to reduce Diablo's health by a third each time the Meteor strikes.

Amazons should also find things relatively straightforward. Go for the old hit-and-run tactic with Impale and use the Decoy skill to confuse him. The Valkyrie spell comes in useful too.

Paladins can use the Thorns skill so that each time Diablo hits, the damage is bounced back to him. This doesn't work for all attacks though, so make sure you still avoid his magic ranged attacks.

Barbarians of course should stand toe to toe and duke it out. The only time the Barbarian needs to take cover is during the Lightning Inferno.

And finally we come to the Necromancer. Ideally he should attack with Poison or Bone spells while a summoned Golem keeps him occupied.

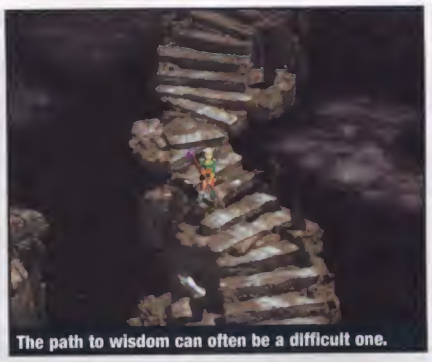
Now, don't think you're going to kill him first time. This part of the game does take practice, but providing you stick with what we've told you, you should be OK. And that's about it – good luck. PC

Break the five seals in order to release Diablo.

If in doubt, turn and run to find a better position.

THE HELL FORGE

The Hellforge Hammer smashes Mephisto's Soulstone.



The path to wisdom can often be a difficult one.

TERRORS END

Fire resistance comes in handy against the big guy.

"Excuse me, this axe is faulty."

BOSS DIRECTORY

Here's a list of all the bosses for the second half of the game. This tells you where they can be found and what special abilities they have.

NAME	LOCATION	SPECIAL
Witch Doctor Endugu	Act III, Flayer Dungeon L3	Magic Resistant, Fire Enchanted
Stormtree	Act III, Lower Kurast	Extra Fast, Lightning Enchanted
Battlemaid Sarina	Act III, Ruined Temple	Extra Fast, Spectral Hit
Icehawk Riftwing	Act III, Sewers L1	Cold Enchanted, Teleportation
Sszark the Burning	Act III, Spider Cavern	Extra Strong, Cursed
Ismail Vilehand	Act III, Travincal	Extra Fast, Cursed
Geleb Flamefinger	Act III, Travincal	Extra Strong, Fire Enchanted
Toorc Icefist	Act III, Travincal	Cold Enchanted, Stone Skin
Wyand Voidfinger	Act III, Durance of Hate L3	Mana Burn, Teleportation
Maffer Dragonhand	Act III, Durance of Hate L3	Extra Fast, Extra Strong, Teleport
Bremm Sparkfist	Act III, Durance of Hate L3	Aura Enchant, Lightning Enchant
Hephasto Armourer	Act IV, River of Flame	Aura, X Strong, Cursed, M Resist
Infector of Souls	Act IV, Chaos Sanctuary Seal	Extra Fast, Spectral Hit
Grand Vizier Chaos	Act IV, Chaos Sanctuary Seal	Extra Fast, Thief, Aura Enchant
Lord De Seis	Act IV, Chaos Sanctuary Seal	Extra Fast, Aura, Thieving

meet new enemies

Find them at gameplay. You'll get all the ladders, leagues, tournaments and competitions you could want. Plus the fastest connections to your favourite games – and to the deadliest human opponents. Get into gameplay, now. And prepare to do battle.

gameplay

CHARACTER SPELLS AND ABILITIES

As in all areas of life the answer is to choose wisely...

Now, the character you choose to play the game as pretty much dictates your whole *Diablo II* experience. There are also many character defining attributes to think about once you've picked your character. One of the most important decisions you need to make is what skills your character should excel in.

Generally speaking it's best not to spread the skills too much. Concentrate instead on three or four areas and strive only to improve them. Take the Amazon for example: instead of having many weak areas she should have one strong bow skill, one strong javelin and spear skill, and one strong passive skill. This way she will always have something she can trust and rely on. In the long run this tactic is far more reliable than being 'jack of all trades, but master of none'.

There follows a list of every skill in the entire game and what they do. Use this information wisely, it might just win you the game.

AMAZON

The Amazon is an all-round character. She is great with ranged weapons such as javelins and bows, and equally as deadly up close with spear type weapons. Dexterity and strength are her main attributes.

BOW AND CROSSBOW

Magic Arrow	Never misses its target.
Fire Arrow	Adds fire damage to standard arrows.
Cold Arrow	Adds cold damage to standard arrows.
Multiple Shot	Splits one arrow into many.
Ice Arrow	Freezes an opponent.
Guided Arrow	Always hits nearest enemy.
Exploding Arrow	Explodes on impact causing widespread damage.
Strafe	Hits all nearby enemies.
Immolation Arrow	Catches fire to anything it hits and burns for a while.
Freezing Arrow	Freezes target and all nearby enemies.

PASSIVE AND MAGIC

Inner Sight	Illuminates enemies making them easier to hit.
Critical Strike	Chance of doing double damage.
Dodge	Increases chance of enemy missing in close combat.
Slow Missiles	Slows enemy missiles by 30 per cent.
Avoid	Dodges ranged attacks.
Penetrate	Increases attack ratings with ranged attacks.
Decoy	Creates another version of you to confuse opponents.
Evade	Escape any attack while moving.
Valkyrie	Summons a Valkyrie with a minimum of 350 hit points.
Pierce	Hits target and continues through to next target.

JAVELIN AND SPEAR

Jab	Multiple hits in one attack.
Power Strike	Adds lightning damage to attack.
Poison Javelin	Poisons enemy when hit.
Impale	Inflicts double damage, but causes more wear on weapon.
Lightning Bolt	Turns any thrown javelins into lightning bolts.
Charged Strike	Multiple lightning attack.
Plague Javelin	Creates expanding cloud of poison around target.
Fend	Simultaneous hits against multiple enemies in close combat.
Lightning Strike	Chain lightning that travels from enemy to enemy.
Lightning Fury	Turns javelin into an extremely powerful chain reaction bolt.

BARBARIAN

The Barbarian is a master of hand-to-hand combat. He is unsurpassed in skill with swords and axes. His main strengths are his vitality and his immense brawn.

COMBAT SKILLS

Double Throw	Allows you to throw two weapons simultaneously.
Bash	A powerful blow that knocks enemies back and stuns them.
Leap	Allows you to leap from one part of the map to another.
Double Swing	Doubles damage.
Stun	Increases attack rating and stuns enemies.
Leap Attack	Leap onto an enemy and surprise it with a powerful attack.
Concentrate	Avoids all enemy attacks during a melee.
Frenzy	Fast and powerful multiple hits.
Whirlwind	A powerful blurring attack that lasts for a few seconds.
Berserk	Even more powerful than the whirlwind attack.

COMBAT MASTERIES

Sword Mastery	Increases damage of sword attacks.
Axe Mastery	Increases damage of axe attacks.
Mace Mastery	Increases damage of mace attacks.
Spear Mastery	Increases damage of spear attacks.
Throwing Mastery	Increases damage of throwing attacks.
Polearm Mastery	Increases damage of polearm attacks.
Increased Stamina	Increases stamina.
Iron Skin	Increases defence rating.
Increased Speed	Increases running and walking speed.
Natural Resistance	Increases resistance to fire, cold, poison and electrical attacks.

WARCRIES

Battle Command	Increases skills of you and any nearby allies.
Howl	Causes some enemies to flee.
Find Potion	Increases the chance of finding a potion on a corpse.
Taunt	Makes monsters approach.
Shout	Increases defence rating of you and any allies.
Find Item	Increases chance of finding an item on a corpse.
Battlecry	Reduces enemies' defence within a set radius.
Battle Orders	Boosts life, mana and stamina for you and party members.
Grim Ward	Turns slain enemy into totem pole that scares other monsters.
Warcry	Stuns nearby creatures.

NECROMANCER

You could say the Necromancer is the ultimate coward. He specialises in raising an army of the dead and getting them to fight his battles for him. Energy and dexterity are the Necro's most important attributes.

POISON AND BONE

Poison Explosion	Corpses explode with poison damage.
Teeth	Shoots sharp, deadly teeth at a single foe.
Bone Armour	Forms a shield of bones around you.
Poison Dagger	Turns an equipped dagger into a poison dagger.
Corpse Explosion	Enemy corpses explode causing damage to nearby monsters.
Bone Prison	Imprisons enemy in a bone cage.
Bone Wall	Blocks enemies with a bone wall.
Bone Spear	A spear of bone that can pass through many monsters.
Poison Nova	Sends a circle of poison outwards from your position.
Bone Spirit	Extremely damaging homing missile.

CURSES

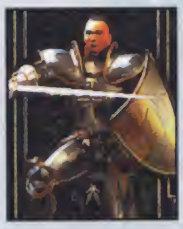
Amplify Damage	Double damage for a single non-magical hit.
Dim Vision	Reduces the sight radius of the targeted monster.
Weaken	Reduces enemy damage.
Iron Maiden	Bounces an enemy attack right back at them.
Terror	Enemies flee.
Confuse	Monsters attack their allies.
Life Tap	Taps life from a monster.
Attract	Makes other enemies attack your target.
Decrepify	Slows enemy.
Lower Resist	Reduces enemy resistance to magical attacks.

SUMMONING AND CONTROL

Skeleton Mastery	Increases the damage your skeletal minions inflict.
Raise Skeleton	Raises a skeletal warrior.
Clay Golem	Raises a Golem to fight for you.
Golem Mastery	Increases the damage your Golems inflict.
Raise Skeletal Mage	Raises a skeletal mage.
Blood Golem	Raises a Golem that increases your life when it hits an enemy.
Summon Resist	Increases the magic resistance of all your minions.
Iron Golem	Raises a Golem by throwing a metal item on the ground.
Fire Golem	Raises a Golem that increases in strength by absorbing fire attacks.
Revive	Raises any dead monster to fight for you (apart from bosses).

PALADIN

The Paladin is a great fighter as well as an unselfish team player. His vast selection of auras can help allies to fight better and weaken monsters. Strength and energy are his most important assets.



COMBAT

Fist of the Heavens	Multiple lightning bolt attack against undead.
Sacrifice	Increases attack damage but weakens your own health.
Smite	Knocks back and damages an enemy with your shield.
Holy Bolt	Lightning bolt against undead.
Zeal	Attacks multiple enemies.
Charge	A powerful electricity charge from the shield.
Vengeance	Hones in on an enemy's weak point.
Blessed Hammer	Spinning hammer that spirals outwards causing fatal damage.
Conversion	Forces an enemy monster to fight for you.
Holy Shield	Shield absorbs damage.

OFFENSIVE AURAS

Might	Increases the damage of the whole party.
Holy Fire	Blasts nearby enemy units with fire.
Thorns	Bounces damage back to the monster that attacked you.
Blessed Aim	Increases attack rating of the entire party.
Concentration	Take no hits in melee.
Holy Freeze	Slows all nearby monsters.
Holy Shock	Blasts enemy units with lightning.
Sanctuary	Undead foes cannot harm you.
Fanaticism	Increases attack speed and power for entire party.
Conviction	Reduces armour class and resistances of all nearby foes.

DEFENSIVE AURAS

Prayer	Heals whole party.
Resist Fire	Increases party's resistance to fire.
Defiance	Increases party's defensive rating.
Resist Cold	Increases party's resistance to cold.
Cleansing	Reduces poison time for whole party.
Resist Lightning	Increases resistance to lightning.
Vigor	Increases party's stamina regeneration rate.
Meditation	Increases mana regeneration rate.
Redemption	Coverts dead enemies into mana.
Salvation	Increases party's resistance to all magical attacks.

SORCERESS

The Sorceress rarely wades in for a brawl, preferring instead to stand back and use her spells. At higher levels, her fire, lightning and cold spells are very effective and arguably make her the most powerful character. Energy and dexterity are her strengths.

FIRE

Fire Mastery	Increases damage caused by all fire spells.
Fire Bolt	Bolt of fire sears a single foe.
Warmth	Increases mana regeneration rate.
Inferno	Control a flamethrower with the mouse.
Blaze	Leaves a trail of flames.
Fireball	Massive damage to multiple enemies.
Enchant	Enchants a weapon with fire damage.
Fire Wall	Barrier of flame blocks approaching enemies.
Meteor	Devastating wide area damage.
Hydra	Summons fire-breathing Dragon.

LIGHTNING

Charged Bolt	Lightning bolt damages single enemy.
Static Field	Nearby enemies lose 30 per cent of their life (great for defeating Diablo).
Telekinesis	Pick up items, open doors and attack monsters from a distance.
Nova	Widespread electrical shockwave.
Lightning	A lightning bolt capable of passing through many monsters.
Chain Lightning	Springs from one enemy to the next.
Teleport	Teleport to a new location with the mouse pointer.
Thunder Storm	Creates multiple lightning bolts.
Energy Shield	Defensive shield based on mana.
Lightning Mastery	Increases the amount of damage caused by lightning spells.

COLD

Ice bolt	Damages and slows enemy.
Frozen Armor	Long lasting defence.
Frost Nova	Shockwave of ice that spreads from you.
Ice Blast	Damages and freezes enemy.
Shiver Armor	Defensive armour that harms enemies when they hit you.
Glacial Spike	Freezes an entire group of monsters.
Blizzard	Damages all enemies caught within it.
Chilling Armor	Increases defence and launches ice bolt at attacker.
Frozen Orb	Sends out spinning orb of ice sending deadly shards everywhere.
Cold Mastery	Increases the amount of damage caused by cold spells.

AMAZON
The Amazon uses her decoy ability to great effect.

BARBARIAN
Our Barbarian indulges in a spot of leapfrog.

NECROMANCER
One hell of a boner.

PALADIN
Freezing enemies is one of the most powerful abilities there is.

SORCERESS
You don't want to follow a Sorceress too closely.

you'll be back

Gameplay is the site you'll want to come back to. It's easy to connect to the UK's best online games community. And the human opponents are the hardest around. Get into gameplay, again and again. www.gameplay.com/wireplay

FREE INTERNET ACCESS

There is no charge for playing games on the gameplay site, however you will be responsible for call charges (from 1p per minute)

gameplay
THE GATEWAY TO GAMES

DEAR WANDY

Once again we solve all your problems with our unique blend of skill, technical expertise and old fashioned bluffing

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE Phil Wand

COME IN, SIT DOWN

Send us a query or a top tip and you could pocket £50. Share your techie or gaming-related problems with us, and we, in turn, may share them with thousands of readers via these very pages in a big communal love-in type of thing. And, as an extra incentive, if we think it's an amazing tip or interesting query, we'll offer you a cool £50. No, really. Send in as much relevant information as you can.

WRITE TO **Dear Wandy, *PC ZONE*, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF**

EMAIL Address your letters to us at **letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk** with the subject heading **Dear Wandy**.

Please note: while we can assure you that we read *every* techie query sent to us, we are unable to offer personal replies. Also, please do not phone, as you're unlikely to reach someone who can help. Thanks.

UNTRENDY TREND

Q Please help. I would like to upgrade my CPU, but I'm a bit confused. I have an A-Trend ATC-6220 main board with a PII 333Mhz CPU. As far as I am aware, this board only supports the PIII Katmai CPU – not the Coppermine. Could you advise me if this is the case and what is the difference between the Katmai and Coppermine CPUs? Would I be better off changing my main board and, if so, what would you recommend?

Richard Bamborough

A **I'm afraid to say that I'm the bearer of bad tidings. After a bit of digging, I managed to find the CPU compatibility chart on the A-Trend website. Unfortunately, the ATC6220 is not able to support the Coppermine. But you could visit the website to check out your options.** www.atrend.com/cpuchart.html

TEN OR A TON?

Q I have two 100-base TX Ethernet RJ45 network cards (which, incidentally, can also operate at 10-base T level) and I was just wondering whether to pay £55 for a 100Mbps hub or save £30 and get a 10Mps hub? I only use them for games – no actual network stuff. My mate says that playing network games only needs a 10Mbps connection, and spending more would give no significant speed increase. Is this correct? Or is it worth spending the extra on a faster hub?

John Anthony

A **Your friend is right. If you think about it, many people play games over the Internet on a V90 modem, which is about 0.05Mbps – although I think all of them would prefer a little more oomph when online. If you're purely going to play games, and don't mind any machine-to-machine file copies taking ten times longer than they need to, get the 10Mbps hub. However, for the sake of £30, the faster technology wins my vote.**

PASSWORDS AND CHIPS

Q I'll admit to not being very technical when it comes to computers, as I've only had one for six months. I've solved all my problems except one: when I bought the computer, there was no password. When I restarted the computer I found you could simply close the password box by clicking on the X button in the bar. Also, I was told that a 500 AMD K6-2 chip was the same as an Intel Pentium III 500 chip. Is this true?

Simon Farrelly

A **By the sounds of it, you're using either Windows 95 or 98. Unfortunately, neither of these provide user passwords as a security method – it's simply a way of keeping different desktops for different users. There's nothing in place to prevent someone from accessing your computer. It's a bit lame, yes, but then it was never designed to be a secure operating system.**

There are several software packages that will prevent access to your computer. You might like to have a look at Secureit Pro, which can be found in the file library at www.zdnet.co.uk. **It's a capable piece of software, securing your desktop while you're away from the computer, and it's free.**

To answer your last question. The only thing the K6-500 and PIII-500 have in common is the 500 in the name, and the fact they both understand 80x86 machine code! The chips themselves are a completely different design, the K6 being more closely related to the original Pentium MMX. The salesman was probably almost certainly trying to get across the point that you should be able to run anything on the K6 that would run on the PIII. Which is pretty much true, except the K6 is not going to be as fast as the PIII. Then again, it's about half the price. A fairer clock-to-clock comparison would be the AMD K6 against the Celeron. The Athlon is the AMD equivalent to the PIII, but although still cheaper than its Intel equivalent, it's far more expensive than the K6.

HELP ME ONLINE

Q Having recently decided that I didn't want to be left behind in the world of online gaming, I have a few questions I'd like to ask. A) What are the different connections available, and what's the difference? B) Can you surf the Net for free, ie no phone charges, and do you have to pay a fee to play games online, eg *Counter-Strike* or *Quake III Arena*? C) Bearing in mind that I'm 13, what would you suggest I do – what connection, what site should I use to play, etc? By the way, my modem is a Rockwell 56K, I'm with Cable & Wireless, and I have a maximum of £150 to spend on whatever is necessary.

Michael Xu

A **There are several ways of connecting to the Internet. If you're in the right area, BT can do you ADSL for £40 a month. This is fast and always connected, so you won't get call charges for Internet use. Cable companies such as NTL will do a similar deal for a cable modem; again, this depends on whether you're in a cabled area. Check at a web directory such as** www.yahoo. co.uk **to track down cable companies in your area and then ask them about getting you hooked up.**

An internal ADSL modem. Given the glacially slow rate at which BT is installing, this may be the last time you see one.

After that, you're down to the slower methods, which are ISDN (ie Home Highway) and the V90 modems. Both of these incur call costs, so if you're going to make any heavy use of the Net, your parents will probably prefer you to sign up with an ISP that provides 0800 access. There are a number of companies doing this, for example Games-World.net, NTL and BT internet. Bookmark www.net4nowt.com **for full details of all the others.**

Once you're on the Net and have bought the game, you won't need to pay to go multiplayer. Go and have a look at www.ZoneGames.co.uk **and you'll see that we host ten games servers you can use for as long as you like, whenever you like. It's a shameless plug, but you'll get the best pings signing up with the people who host the servers at Games-World.net. Visit** www.games-world.net **for more details.**

DOWNLOAD VIRGIN

Q Although I've been using computers for a while now, I've only just started using the Internet from home. I was hoping you could clarify some questions I have about modems and connections. First, I have a V90 modem. Why then when I connect using a dial-up is 48Kbps about the fastest connection I can achieve? When downloading the fastest transfer I can achieve is about 6Kbps – usually closer to 2 or 3Kbps? Also, a few applications on my computer have asked if I have a 'proxy connection' when I'm installing them. I've assumed

An Avsys stackable hub. Geek dreams are made of this.

I don't have one, but what is one anyway, and does it offer any advantages over a standard modem connection? Also, do you know any tips to improve the speed of downloads? As downloading large files, such as the update to *Counter-Strike*, takes ages.

Tom Crocker

A Connecting at 48K is pretty normal for a 56K modem. Really. The 56K in the name is only achievable in a perfect lab environment. The best I have seen in the 'real world' is 52Kbps and that didn't hold up for long. The reason you're not getting the download rate you expect is because you are confusing your units. The modem is connecting in BITS, and the download rate shown by Windows is in kiloBYTES. 8 bits to the byte, so a 48Kbit connection is 6Kbytes a second. Sometimes the download rate can exceed this when the modems at both ends compress the data, particularly when transferring some text documents.

A proxy connection is usually found in an office environment, where only one machine has access to the outside world and everyone else connects 'through' them. It requires proxy software and would be of little use to the average home user.

With regard to the large updates and patches we are getting these days, I do understand your pain. With a V90 modem, you can only make a cup of coffee and be patient.

"Why when I connect using a dial-up is 48Kbps about the fastest connection I can achieve? Also, do you know any tips to improve the speed of downloads?"

TOM CROCKER IS PUZZLED BY HIS MODEM

MP3 PLAYER

Q I need some help choosing an MP3 player, and I feel that information about them at the moment doesn't really tell me much. I would like to know if there is a player that can play music other than MP3s. At the moment, all my music is recorded in RealAudio format because I use RealPlayer to rip my CDs. But with Microsoft's new player saying that the format has a smaller file size and the same quality, I'd like the MP3 player to be expandable so that it could play these as well. Do they include a radio?

Kenneth

A OK, so you currently have your songs in MP3 and RA format, but you'd like to use WMA in the future. Some of the leading MP3 players support this and other formats – for example, Diamond's Rio 600 will play WMA and even books from Audible.com – but RA has for the most part been very specific to Real. That said, the RCA Lyra will play RealAudio files and I believe it's unique in this respect. Windows Media Audio is a Microsoft format, and historically Microsoft has been generous in letting other people use their formats; not only that, it's likely to dominate the online music scene – the new Win-Jam player, for example, uses it exclusively. Our only criticism of WMA is that in some instances the compression gets ahead of the quality, and you end up with a wishy-washy, metallic sound, as though the track was recorded inside a large tumble drier. This is particularly evident in slow and moody pieces, so if you're into classical music or ambient trance you may want to stick with MP3. As for a player with a built-in radio, some of the latest products include an FM receiver. Note also that many are available in traditional 'rack' type format, meaning you can now slot them into your stereo in the lounge. Portables have never been my 'thing', not only because they're too quiet and sound awful, but because I'm always sitting on them. PZ

Portable players: nasty, messy, naff-sounding, flimsy things.

The Cheatmistress Presents

TIPS, CHEATS & WALKTHROUGHS

CHEATS UNLIMITED

THE WORLD'S NUMBER ONE CHOICE FOR GAMING HELP

TOP WALKTHROUGHS PLUS OVER 10,000 CHEATS & TIPS

A - 01
Abe's Exoddus
Abe's Oddysee
Actua Soccer 1, 2 & 3
Age of Empires 1 & 2
Age of Wonder
Airline Tycoon
Alien Trilogy
Alien vs Predator
Alpha Centauri
Andretti Racing
Ants
Area 51
Army Men Series
Atomic Bomberman
B - 02
Baldur's Gate
Batman Forever
Battlezone 1 & 2
Blade Runner
Blam, Machine Head
Blood
Braveheart
Brian Lara Cricket
Broken Sword 1 & 2
Business Tycoon
C - 03
Caesar 1, 2 & 3
Cannon Fodder
Carmageddon 1 & 2
Champ. Manager Series
Chasm: The Rift
Civilisation 1 & 2
Colin McRae Rally
Colonization
Comm. & Conq. Series
Commandos Series
Constructor
Croc. Legend of Gobbos
Crusaders of M & Magic
Cueball Jimmy White's 2
D - 04
Dark Forces
Dark Reign
Day of the Tentacle
Deathtrap Dungeon
Delta Force 1 & 2
Descent 1, 2 & 3
Destruction Derby 1 & 2
Deus-EX
Diablo 1 & 2
Die By The Sword
Die Hard Trilogy 1 & 2
Dino Crisis
Discworld Noir
Dogs of War
Doom 1 & 2
Dracula Resurrection
Driver
Duke Nukem Series
Dungeon Keeper 1 & 2
Dynasty Wars
E - 05
Earth 2150
Earthworm Jim 1 & 2
Emergency
Empire of the Ants
ESPN X Games
Euro 2000
Excalibur 2555 AD
Excessive Speed
Extreme Assault
Extreme Pinball
F - 06
F-22 Series
FA PL F'tball Man. 2000
Fatal Racing
FIFA Series
Final Doom
Final Fantasy 7 & 8
Firestorm
Flight Sim 98
Flight Unlimited 1 & 2
Flying Heroes
Formula 1 Series
Formula One Grand Prix
Forsaken
Frogger
Full Throttle
G - 07
Gabriel Knight 3
Gangsters
Gex
Goblins
Goosebumps
G-Police 1 & 2
Grand Prix Manager 2
Grand Touring
Grim Fandango
Ground Control
GTA 1, 2 & London
H - 08
Half Life
Half Life: Opp. Forces
Hardwar
Heavy Gear
Hercules
Heretic
Heroes Of M & M Series
Hexen 1 & 2
Hi Octane
Hidden and Dangerous
Homeworld
I - 09
Icewind Dale
Imperialism 2
Imperium Galactica
Incoming
In Cold Blood
Indiana Jones Series
Indianapolis
Int. Cricket Captain
Interstate 76 & Nitro
Iwar
J - 10
Jeff Gordon Exl Racing
Judge Dredd
Jurassic Park
K - 11
Kingpin
Klingon Honor Guard
Knights and Merchants
L - 12
Lego Island
Lego Loco
Lego Racers
Lego Rock Raiders
Lemmings 2 & 3D
Links
Little Big Adventure 2
Longest Journey
Lords of Magic SE
M - 13
Machine Hunter
Madden NFL 97 & 98
Magic Carpet 1 & 2
Martian Gothic
Mass Destruction
Master of Orion 1 & 2
MDK 1 & 2
Mechcommander
Mechwarrior 2
Men in Black
Messiah
Metal Gear Solid
Microsoft Flight Sim 98
Midtown Madness
Monopoly
Monster Truck Mad. 1&2
Mortal Kombat Series
Moto Racer
Motocross Madness
Motorhead
Myth: The Fallen Lords
N - 14
Nascar 2
NBA Hangtime
NBA Jam Extreme
NBA Live Series95
Need For Speed 1,2 & 3
NFS: Porsche Unleashed
NFL Quarterback Club
NHL Series
Nightmare Creatures
Nox
Nuclear Strike
O - 15
Off. Formula 1 Racing
Omikron:Nomad Soul
Operation Bodycount
Outcast
Outlaws
Outrun
P - 16
Pandemonium 1 & 2
Pharoah
Pinball Fantasies
Pitfall
Planescape Torment
POD
Police Quest: Swat 2
Populous 1 & 2
Populous: The Beginning
Premier Manager Series
Prince of Persia
Pro Pinball
Q - 17
Quake 1, 2 & 3
R - 18
Railroad Tycoon 1 & 2
Rainbow Islands
Rainbow Six
Rally Champ. 2000
Rally Cross
Rayman
Redline
Requiem: Ave. Angels
Resident Evil 1, 2 & 3
Revolt
Rival Realms
Road Rash
Rogue Spear & Urb. Ops
Rogue Squadron
Railcage 1 & 2
Roller Coaster Tycoon
S - 19
S.C.A.R.S.
Sanatarium
Screamer 1 & 2
Screamer Rally
Sensible World of Soccer
Settlers 1, 2 & 3
Shogo Mobile Armor Div
Shogun: Total War
Silver
Sim City Series
Sim Theme Park
Sim Tower
Sims
SiN
Slave Zero
Soldier of Fortune
Sonic 3D Blast
Sonic and Knuckles Coll.
Soul Reaver-Leg. of Kain
South Park
Special Ops
Spectra Core
Star Lancer
Star Trek: Armada
Star Trek: Birth Of Fed.
Star Trek: Hidden Evil
Star Wars. Force Comm.
Star Wars: Phant. Men.
Star Wars. Racer
Star Wars: Rogue Squad.
Star Wars: S. Of Empire
StarCraft
Stonekeep
Street Fighter 2
Street Fighter Alpha
Super Bubsy
Super Frog
Superbike World Champ
Swat 3
SWIV 3D
Syndicate
Syndicate Wars
System Shock
T - 20
Tachyon. The Fringe
Take No Prisoners
Tarzan
Test Drive Series
The Curse Of M. Island
The Hunt for Red Oct.
The Settlers 1, 2 & 3
The Sims
Theme Hospital
Theme Park
Theme Park World
Thief 1 & 2
Tibenan Sun
Time Commando
TOCA 1 & 2
Tom Clancy's SSN
Tomb Raider 1-5
Tony Hawk's 2
Total Annihilation
Total Ann. Kingdoms
Toy Story 1 & 2
Trespasser
Triple Play 97, 98 & 99
Turok 1 & 2
U - 21
Ultima Underworld
Ultimate Soc Man Series
Unreal
Unreal Tournament
Urban Chaos
US Navy Fighters 1 & 97
V - 22
Vampire:Masq. Red.
Vigilante
Virtua Fighter
Virtual Springfield
Virus
VR Powerboat Racing
W - 23
War Games: Defcon 1
War Gods
Warcraft 1 & 2
Wargasm
Warhammer: D. Omen
Warzone 2100
Wing Commander IV
Wipeout & XL
Wolfenstein 3D
World Cup 98
Worms Series
WWF Wrestlemania
X - 24
X-Com Series
X-Files
X-Games Pro Boarder
X-Men Child. Of Atom
X-Wing

THE ABOVE LIST IS JUST A SELECTION OF WHAT'S ON OFFER

PERSONS AGED 16 OR OVER MAY CALL THIS NUMBER

09066 098 135

CALLS TO THE ABOVE NUMBER COST 60P PER MINUTE

PERSONS AGED UNDER 16 MAY CALL THIS NUMBER
09066 098 033
Calls to the above number cost 60p per minute

MOBILE PHONE ACCESS:
0700 5900 615

INTERNATIONAL ACCESS: +44 (0)700 5900 020

TO SAVE TIME DURING YOUR CALL YOU MAY PRESS * TO RESTART THE SERVICE OR # TO MOVE BACK A STEP

Dreamcast PlayStation GAME BOY COLOR SEGA SATURN PlayStation2 NINTENDO 64 PC

All logos are trademarks of their respective companies

Please ensure you have permission of the bill payer. Calls to the under 16 number have a maximum cost of £3.00 and will be terminated by forced release after 5 minutes. No restrictions apply to the over 16 number. Ensure you are calling from a touch tone phone. Please put comments or queries in writing to Interactive Telcom Ltd., 8 Grants Walk, PL25 5AA or call our Customer Service: 08700 885 656

WWW.CHEATSUNLIMITED.COM

WATCHDOG

The software industry can sometimes be a closed shop when it comes to punters and their complaints. Let *PC ZONE* ramraid their premises for you and snatch some answers...

HIM'LL FIX IT Adam Phillips

"And now a word from our sponsors..."

LIVING IN A WORLD O' HURT?

If you've got a consumer issue that needs addressing then drop us a line. Please remember that technical issues are not covered by Watchdog – if you've got a techie problem, then write to Dear Wandy (page 132).

WRITE TO **Watchdog, *PC ZONE*, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF**

EMAIL **Alternatively, e-mail us at letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk** with the subject heading **Watchdog**

TAKING LIBERTIES

Q I am annoyed with the service offered by LibertySurf. Since the change to the un-notified two-hour cut-off, the standard of service has fallen consistently. I read a letter of complaint in *PC ZONE* a while ago with a reply from LibertySurf. LibertySurf claimed that its software did not interfere with games. Which is complete rubbish. Not only can I see ads while playing *Unreal Tournament*, I have a portion of my screen messed up on *Half-Life* and constant ads flickering in the background.

The ads download all the way through games, creating lag problems where my game is frozen for anything up to 20 seconds. Also, if the software times out while I am away from the computer, it refuses to relinquish control of my phone line a fair proportion of the time.

LibertySurf's 0845 number has considerable line noise and a poor connection-to-try percentage. The 0800 server is not much better and is constantly not working properly. When logged on, the connection speed varies from a paltry 37,700bps to 46,677bps.

Also, LibertySurf's adverts disrupt the loading of web pages and its software often crashes. Several times it has knocked out my computer with blue-screen-of-death moments. Quite how LibertySurf can now call itself an unmetered Internet access ISP, I don't know. How can a two-hour cut-off be called unmetered?

Andrew Burnes

A **You've certainly provided us with a long list of complaints. It's a shame then that LibertySurf's answers were rather on the short side. "Our terms and conditions state that we will take advertising revenue," offers a spokesperson for LibertySurf. "This enables us to offer our service at such good value."**

OK, but how about the problem of ads popping up while fragging in *UT*? "Our software can, at times, conflict with gaming, as banner ads display over the game and rotate, which takes up bandwidth."

Err... OK. We like LibertySurf's bluntness on this, but it's not particularly great news for Andrew. As for your other criticisms, such as varying speed connections and line noise, LibertySurf wasn't forthcoming with answers.

To be blunt, Watchdog can't help but feel that if multiplay is the primary reason for your time spent online, you should consider heading off to another ISP to see if they can offer a more appropriate service – that is, no ads messing up your lag times.

MONITOR MADNESS

The saga of purchasing online continues...

Q Five weeks ago, I bought a Hansol 710d monitor through Jungle.com. The monitor arrived when I was on holiday, so I rang Jungle upon my return. I was assured it had been signed for and told to ring Parceline to find out where it had been delivered to.

After numerous phone calls, Parceline eventually told me it had been delivered to my neighbour six doors away. I finally plugged it in to find I was unable to get the picture straight and the toolbar at the bottom seemed to shrink. I phoned the manufacturer's service centre in Scotland and they agreed to send out a replacement.

I waited a few days and then this guy turned up with a second-hand 710p. He said that if I wanted a new one to go through Jungle.com. I phoned Jungle and was told it would be picked up and taken away for testing. Three days and lots of phone calls later, Jungle assured me that it would send the monitor back to me and said to take it up with Hansol. I asked Jungle if there could be a graphics card problem, but they didn't know. So I phoned Hansol and a nice man agreed to go through the set-up with me when I got the monitor back from Jungle.

Another week passed and I rang Jungle and Parceline to see where the monitor had to go. They said they had tried to deliver it to my home address (even though I had checked twice with Jungle and twice with Parceline to ensure that they would deliver to my work address). I eventually decided to pick it up from them myself, only to find the monitor broken in half!

Martin Yarrow

A **This is horrific stuff, Martin, and you've clearly got the patience of a saint. We sent your e-mail to Scott Thomas, associate customer service director at Jungle.com. He responded directly to you with the following:**

"We were sorry to learn of the problems you have experienced with regard to this order and we regret the circumstances that prompted your contact with us. We extend our assurance that your experience is not typical of our usual level of service. We note your comments concerning our delivery agents, Parceline, and we apologise for the difficulties experienced with regard to both deliveries from us. A copy of your comments has been referred to our account manager at Parceline, so a full investigation into this matter can be conducted. We trust this action will prevent any future occurrences of similar difficulties for our customers.

It's a Jungle.com out there.

"With regard to your comments concerning the warranty replacement policy of Hansol, we understand the cause of your dissatisfaction. We apologise that you were issued an apparently second-hand unit of a different specification to that received from Jungle.com, in replacement for the unit shipped by us. While we are sure you appreciate we are not responsible for the above, we have noted your comments with the utmost concern and have begun an investigation into the circumstances cited. Our thanks for bringing this matter to our attention.

"To prevent any incidents of a similar nature arising in the future, we strongly recommend that you initially contact our technicians with any issues concerning suspected faults or compatibility, as they may be able help or provide the correct contact telephone numbers for manufacturers. You can contact our Technical Support Department either by telephone on 0870 727 5432, by fax on 01675 435354 or via email to technical@jungle.com. **Once again, our sincere apologies."**

Feel apologised enough to yet, Martin? Just let us know that you got your replacement monitor in one piece, please.

KNACKERED NETWORK?

Q I am writing to you regarding NTL and its extremely poor £40-a-month cable modem service. I had a cable modem installed at the end of May. At first, it provided a good ping time of about 20 to 40. Then, at the end of June, I started to have problems so I phoned NTL's tech support who said they knew of the problem. I was told it would be fixed in a few days and if I had any more trouble to call back. Well, it wasn't fixed, so I phoned again and was told that NTL was now monitoring the situation and to give it another week.

It has been going on now for the last 12 weeks and I have only been able to use it on the odd day. I've rung on numerous occasions and have been told things such as: "Maybe it's just a busy time to be using your cable modem" and "try it at a different time of the day". When I pointed out that I have to go to work during the

day, thus can only use it at night, and that my £175 cable modem (including Ethernet card and connection fee) was performing slower than my old £25 modem, I was asked to send in some trace routes so NTL could look at the situation.

Another time I phoned in, I was told that NTL was not aware of any problems with its network and this is as good as it gets. I then said that must be wrong, because I'm currently getting a download speed of between 800 bytes and 2K per second – this is not what I call high-speed Internet access.

This type of thing has been going on and on, and I could give you many more examples of NTL's incompetence. When I ask about some type of refund for the last 12 weeks of use because I am not getting the type of service I was told I would be getting (and the type of service being advertised), I just get passed about from department to department.

I have also been told that NTL has just upgraded its network and is now tweaking it to get optimum performance. But from what I can gather from reading the NTL newsgroups and talking to other cable modem users, this has made little difference whatsoever.

I understand that this is still a new thing for NTL, but I do expect its system to be working at least 80 to 90 per cent of the time at a useable standard!

Giles Bennett

A NTL says it is investigating the problems experienced by you, "which do not appear to be linked to the quality of service provided to other NTL cable modem users," offers a spokesperson for the company. "However, we are happy to look into compensating Mr Bennett or any other cable modem user experiencing similar problems with the service."

NTL goes on to say that it is investing over £3million a day in its network and investing heavily in your area as well, Giles. All very well and good but do let us know how the compensation works out for you...

"When I ask about some type of refund for the last 12 weeks, I get passed from department to department"

GILES BENNETT LOSES ALL PATIENCE WITH NTL'S CABLE MODEM SERVICE

COMPAQ-ED UP!

Q I bought a Compaq desktop just under a year ago, and approximately three months ago I had (and still have) a problem with the modem on the machine. Basically, because the machine's performance by that time had begun to noticeably deteriorate, I decided to format the HD and re-install the OS using the supplied QuickRestore disc.

Upon rebooting the machine, I found I had no modem drivers. The modem drivers on the QuickRestore CD don't work and seem to have no settings for the UK phone system. I called Compaq and was told to download the driver from its site. I then discovered that the driver on its site was the same one as on the CD.

I continued to call Compaq technical support for about two months on and off, during which time I was promised an e-mail with correct drivers attached (didn't arrive), a CD with drivers (didn't arrive), and most recently a CD with diagnostics tools from the engineering department (guess what...). I got increasingly frustrated with this and stopped calling. I have persuaded friends to download every modem driver on Compaq's ftp, but to no avail.

The machine is still under warranty (for the next month) and writing to *PC ZONE* is probably my last chance before I'm forced to buy a new modem.

Peter Isserlis

A Ahh, after waiting two weeks for an answer from Compaq, the company did finally manage to get back to Watchdog, bless 'em. Paul Sampson, Compaq's customer advocacy manager, said: "Thank you for bringing the concerns of one of your readers to the attention of Compaq. I am pleased to advise you that Mr Isserlis has been contacted directly by Compaq Technical Support who are working with him to ensure that a resolution is reached to his satisfaction."

He says that Compaq is: "very concerned that Mr Isserlis did not feel he was dealt with in an efficient manner in the first instance. We are investigating the history of the case to see what we can learn from it to improve our Technical Support Services."

In the meantime, Compaq strongly encourages readers that if they have similar concerns with its hardware they should: "contact technical support in order to ensure an expert and timely response". Compaq Technical Support can be contacted on 0870 559 2000. The lines are open from 8am to 8pm Monday-Friday, and 10am to 4pm at weekends.

By the time you read this, Peter, you should be a happy camper. If not, please let us know... PZ

READ ME

If you are writing in to complain about a product, whether it be a ropey piece of software or a shoddy PC, please supply us with your full name, address and contact number. With PCs especially, make sure that you also include all purchasing details such as reference and invoice numbers. It means that we can resolve your problems much quicker.

PC ZONE

COMING NEXT ISSUE

Z

STEEL SOLDIERS

One of the UK's most celebrated development teams is about to make a return to the PC with what is sure to be one of the finest real-time strategy games of the year, *Z: Steel Soldiers*. We talk to The Bitmap Brothers, legendary creators of *Speedball*, *Xenon*, *Gods* and the original *Z*.

LETTER FROM AMERICA

Best FPS: *Half-Life*. Best RTS: *Homeworld*. Best tactical action game: *SWAT 3*. Then there's *Diablo II*, *Ground Control*, *Tribes*, *Zeus* and a host of others. All these games are from Sierra and we headed off to the US to see what it has in store for 2001. See for yourself, only in next month's *PC ZONE*.

BLACK & WHITE

A quick phone call to Lionhead tells us that *Black & White* is nearing completion.There may be a 'slim chance' that we will be reviewing it next month, but any chance is a chance worth taking, no matter how slim.

WHY DO WE PLAY GAMES?

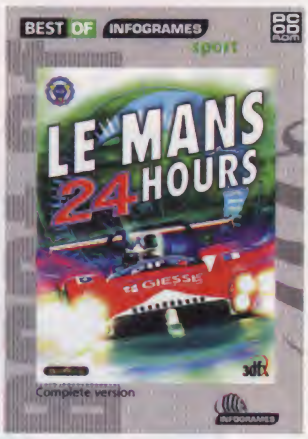
Have you ever asked yourself this question? No, neither have we, but a psychologist and a sociologist have teamed up to find out why we play the games that we do, what effect they may have on us and just how deeply gaming culture permeates our society. We have a chat with them as they continue on their mission.

ON SALE

THURSDAY 11 JANUARY

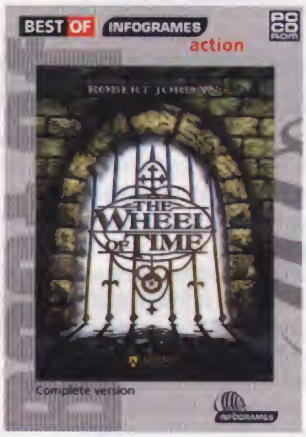
4 FOR £30*

OUTCAST



LE MANS 24 HOURS

DISCWORLD NOIR



THE WHEEL OF TIME

TOTAL ANNIHILATION KINGDOMS

DRIVER

BEETLE CRAZY CUP

UNREAL TOURNAMENT

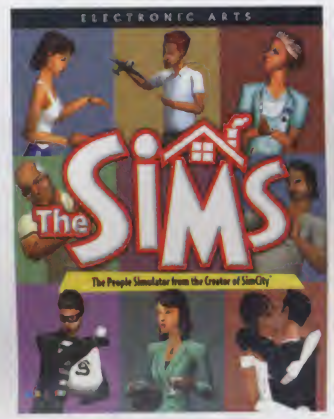
MANY MORE TITLES AVAILABLE

WHATEVER TURNS YOU ON

Virgin megastores

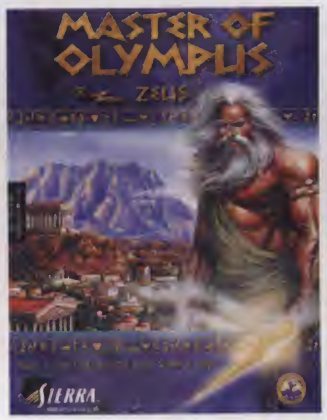
*Stickered Product only, while stocks last, prices may vary in Republic of Ireland

2 FOR £50*



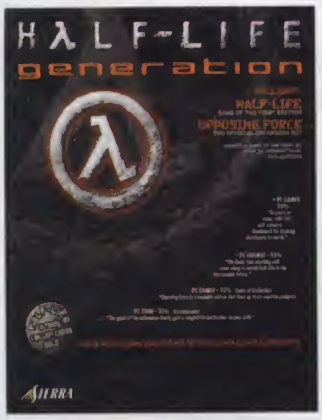
THE SIMS™

SHOGUN TOTAL WAR™

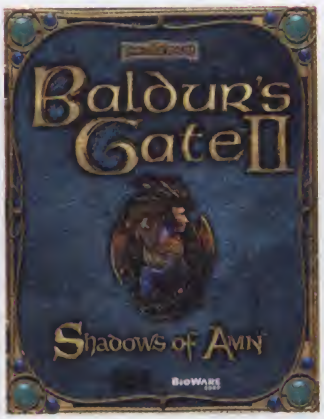


ZEUS: MASTERS OF OLYMPUS

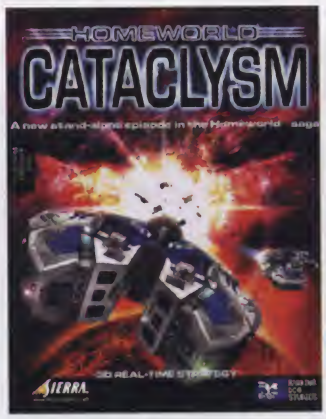
STARSHIP TROOPERS



HALF-LIFE GENERATION



BALDERS GATE II
Shadows Of Amn



HOMEWORLD CATACLYSM

SWAT 3 CLOSE QUATERS BATTLE
Elite Edition

WHATEVER TURNS YOU ON

Virgin megastores

*OFFER ENDS 22.12.00. INDIVIDUAL TITLES £29.99. STICKERED PRODUCTS ONLY. PRICES MAY VARY IN R.O.I.

EA GAMES,the EA GAMES logo,The Sims,and the Maxis logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of Electronic Arts Inc.in the US and/or other countries.
Shogun Total War and the Total War logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of Dreamtime Interactive Productions Pty Ltd.

PCZONE TOP 100

Welcome to the definitive buyers' guide for all discerning PC gamers. The games that grace these pages represent the best titles across all genres. Check here for regular updates

This is the new *PC ZONE* Top 100. Within it you will find the best games you can currently buy for your PC. All the games here deserve a place in our illustrious Top 100 as we go to print, but that could all change next month when newer titles come in and older games receive new ratings to reflect where they stand in the great scheme of things. Shrewd buyers will always check here first before parting with their money.

BENCHMARK GAME

Benchmark titles are the games that you simply must have if you are a fan of the genre. They are considered by the *PC ZONE* team to be absolute classics and should be bought without hesitation. All new games are compared to their genre's benchmark title when they are reviewed. Bear this in mind before writing into Mailbox complaining that the latest 3D shooter didn't automatically get 90 per cent: check here first to see what it's up against! Additionally, all games in that genre will receive a new rating every time a new benchmark title comes along.

NEW ENTRY

In the wonderful world of PC gaming, new titles come in every month, some of which are better than the games currently in the Top 100. When this happens, they will gain their rightful place in the Top 100 and lesser titles will drop out to make room for them.

BUDGET

If a game in the Top 100 is available on budget, it will be tagged accordingly. Games that are lower in price than other titles in their genre do not necessarily receive a new score to reflect this. The latest score the game received will still apply – it's up to you to decide whether or not the game is worth buying at its new price point.

PCZONE CLASSIC

Under the *ZONE* scoring system, new games will have to be pretty spectacular to receive this award. They will have to take their genre to unprecedented new heights and represent a major step forward for PC gaming. There are now very few titles that can justifiably be described as *PC ZONE* Classics. This trend will continue across all genres. Generally speaking, all *ZONE* Classics are must-have titles – the benchmark title being the definitive game of the genre – but that does not mean you should discount games that score 80+ per cent. These games receive the *PC ZONE* Award For Excellence and are essential buys if you are a fan of the genre the game fits into. Classics, on the other hand, are games we think will appeal to everyone and will bring new fans to that particular genre. There will not be many of them, but when we say a game is a classic, we *mean* it.

FIRST-PERSON SHOOTERS

HALF-LIFE

PCZ #71 • 95%

Taking the first-person shooter as its starting point, *Half-Life* redefines the genre with an engrossing story, cracking atmosphere and some of the best AI ever coded. *Half-Life* is probably still the best game you can install on your PC, and it's now available with the superb *Opposing Force* add-on in the 'Generations' pack.
PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 9209 100

UNREAL TOURNAMENT — PCZ #81 • 90%

Played over a network or the Internet, *Unreal Tournament* is more than a match for *Quake III*'s multiplayer, with a combination of well-designed maps and diverse gameplay. The single-player mode might be too short, but it's still going to be more than a challenge for most.
PUBLISHER Infogrames • 020 7738 8199

QUAKE III ARENA — PCZ #87 • 89%

The biggest brand name in PC gaming is back. The sheer speed, intensity and unrelenting action of *Quake III* make it an essential purchase for all shoot 'em up fans, but sadly the lack of variety prevents it from topping *Unreal Tournament*.
PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700

GUNMAN CHRONICLES — PCZ #97 • 87%

NEW ENTRY While comparisons to *Half-Life* are inevitable, *Gunman* contains more than enough nuances to stand out on its own merits. With a superb array of weapons, intense battles and a gripping atmosphere it's a must buy for any fan of the genre.
PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 9209 100

PROJECT IGI — PCZ #97 • 85%

NEW ENTRY Combining the action of *Soldier Of Fortune* with the stealth of *Metal Gear Solid*, *Project IGI* is the thinking man's FPS. It features vast, open landscapes, and its clever changes of pace and espionage orientated storyline will keep you engrossed throughout.
PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000

STAR TREK: VOYAGER – ELITE FORCE — PCZ #94 • 84%

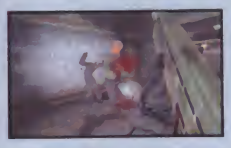
The first single-player game to use the *Quake III* engine, *Voyager* offers enough thrills to please even the hardest of Trekkie haters. A new scripting system and some clever team fighting by your side, renew faith in an increasingly multiplayer genre.
PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700

THIEF II: THE METAL AGE — PCZ #88 • 82%

The original *Thief* set new standards in FPS titles with its move away from mindless action towards stealth and its excellent use of light and sound. This sequel delivers more of the same quality gameplay, minus the out-of-place zombie levels.
PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000

ALIENS VS PREDATOR — PCZ #77 • 80%

It might not be the best FPS you can buy, but it's definitely the scariest. *Aliens Vs Predator* is also the only game that offers three distinct ways of playing through the game, so if you're looking for a solid single-player blast, this provides excellent value for money.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



SOLDIER OF FORTUNE — PCZ #89 • 79%

More like an arcade explosion of unmitigated violence than a FPS in the *Half-Life* mould, *SoF* is a great deal of fun. It's also very sick. If you can stomach amputations and decapitations, then we can guarantee you pure, mindless entertainment.
PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700

KISS PSYCHO CIRCUS — PCZ #93 • 77%

The team of *Daikatana*-defectors have come up with a much better game – using the LithTech engine and basing the levels on songs by Kiss. This is not cutting-edge gaming, but you'll find it is a solid, fun shooter.
PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900

STRATEGY

SHOGUN: TOTAL WAR

PCZ #89 • 93%

Shogun is the first strategy game that has blown us away in a long time. Command enormous armies in epic and bloody battles, send ninjas to assassinate enemy generals and conquer your way through the map of feudal Japan. The 3D engine works beautifully and the in-game options never get in the way of instant playability.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

AGE OF EMPIRES II — PCZ #84 • 88%

It might not be radically different from the original, but sometimes evolution is just as good as revolution. In *AOE II*, the gameplay has been honed to perfection with balanced units and strong single and multiplayer campaigns. Forget the hype of *Tiberian Sun* and opt for this classic RTS.
PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000

GROUND CONTROL — PCZ #92 • 87%

RTSs are increasingly dropping resource management in order to concentrate on strategy. *Ground Control* pulls this off with flair, gorgeous looks and a brilliant camera. If you're after a 3D strategy title but don't fancy samurais, this is the answer.
PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100

CIVILIZATION II: TEST OF TIME — PCZ #68 • 86%

A title that lives up to its name, *Civilization II* is probably the oldest game in the Top 100 and it will probably still be around in years to come. Turn-based and in 2D, it offers unlimited replayability and depth. One of the few games that everyone should own.
PUBLISHER Hasbro • 020 8569 1234

SUDDEN STRIKE — PCZ #96 • 86%

Sudden Strike mixes WWII action with a heavy dose of realism, in order to create a compelling RTS. Its clever resource management, huge selection of units and separate campaigns, make it a must for RTS fans looking for something a bit different.
PUBLISHER CDV • 0208 880 4144

ZEUS: MASTER OF OLYMPUS — PCZ #97 • 85%

NEW ENTRY From the creators of *Pharaoh* and *Caesar III*, comes this intricate yet hugely playable micro-management god game. It's hugely addictive, but suffers slightly from its lack of multiplayer options and a poor combat system.
PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 9209 100

HOMEWORLD: CATACLYSM — PCZ #96 • 85%

Relic's mission to improve the already superb 3D RTS *Homeworld*, has proved to be a great success. The *Homeworld* universe has been expanded, providing a more elaborate storyline and greater scope for tactical options than its predecessor.
PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 9209 100

EARTH 2150 — PCZ #90 • 84%

A fantastic 3D engine and great detail team up with sheer playability to make this one of the best RTSs around. Second only to *Shogun* this year, *Earth 2150* is a more traditional strategy title, but it takes the genre even further than it has been before.
PUBLISHER Mattel Interactive • 0144 424 6333

C&C: RED ALERT 2 — PCZ #95 • 82%

After the disappointment of *Tiberian Sun* we weren't expecting much from this sequel, but we were pleasantly surprised. *RA2* manages to mix a believable story line with enhanced gameplay and extremely versatile units. An entertaining sequel.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

IMPERIUM GALACTICA II — PCZ #85 • 79%

Space expansion and empire building have never looked so good. This title boasts the depth of a turn-based strategy game with the immediate action of real-time, plus a great interface and tutorial, which means you'll know your way around in no time.
PUBLISHER GT Interactive • 020 7258 3791

ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

DEUS EX

PCZ #93 • 94%

Warren Spector takes the finer elements of *Half-Life*, *System Shock 2* and *Thief* and weaves an RPG of complex beauty that revolutionises computer games. A fascinating sci-fi plot and complete player freedom are just some of the reasons why *Deus Ex* is such a landmark wonder.
PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 020 8636 3000

SYSTEM SHOCK 2 — PCZ #80 • 91%

Definitely one of the most compelling, original and disturbing games to hit the PC, *System Shock 2* manages to successfully mix the genres of role-playing, action and adventure into one. Play it in the house on your own with the lights off to prove how hard you are.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE – REDEMPTION — PCZ #92 • 89%

This amazing RPG is a treat to play. An epic storyline, tactical combat and great acting and music more than make up for the fact that it's a linear hack 'n' slash game at heart.
PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456 7000

PLANESCAPE: TORMENT — PCZ #87 • 87%

An incredible game from Black Isle, creators of *Baldur's Gate*. It's a dark, adult scorcher of an RPG. Moreover, the character development is the best we've seen in any game of its kind and the story is compelling, with well-scripted dialogue.
PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666

BALDUR'S GATE II — PCZ #96 • 85%

The original *Baldur's Gate* was hailed as one of the best story-driven role-playing games ever. Although this sequel is not vastly different, it is bigger, better and extremely addictive. *Baldur's Gate II* is a must for all RPG fans.
PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666

FINAL FANTASY VII — PCZ #66 • 80%

Despite the recent release of *FFVIII*, we still rate this earlier episode in the series above it. The story is better, there are more subgames and the whole thing is more involving, especially if you like Japanese-style cartoony graphics. And it should be out on budget soon.
PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 020 8636 3000

FALLOUT 2 — PCZ #71 • 79%

Does exactly what it says on the tin. Twice as big as the original, but utilising the exact same engine. If you liked the first game, you'll love this – not twice as much, but certainly for twice as long. A real life-sapper and one of the best RPGs money can buy.
PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666

ICEWIND DALE — PCZ #93 • 75%

Despite the introduction of larger enemies, *Icewind Dale* is little more than an add-on pack for *Baldur's Gate*. It looks the same and it plays the same, which isn't surprising since it's made by the same people. Very good, but we'll wait for *BG2*.
PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666

DIABLO II — PCZ #93 • 72%

Blizzard might have repackaged the original *Diablo* and produced an even bigger version with the same graphics and gameplay, but its fans aren't complaining. It's already one of the hottest and biggest-selling games ever.
PUBLISHER Havas Interactive • 0118 920 9100

ODIUM — PCZ #87 • 70%

Imagine an RPG in the style of *Final Fantasy* with battle sequences à la *X-COM* and you'll have a pretty good idea of what *Odium* is like. The story is set in a European city populated by UN soldiers and a variety of monsters. In short, it's curiously compelling and it will keep you hooked for a while.
PUBLISHER Ubi Soft • 020 8944 9000

ACTION/ADVENTURES

GRIM FANDANGO

PCZ #71 • 88%

If you've followed the successes of LucasArts from the early days of *Monkey Island*, *Sam & Max* and *Day Of The Tentacle*, this is a must-buy. Sublime graphics and genuine humour ensure it's a classic of its genre. A word of warning: it's bloody hard and, if your mind doesn't work laterally, you'll be playing it until the day you die.
PUBLISHER LucasArts • 020 7368 2255

DISCWORLD NOIR — PCZ #79 • 87%

Although the point-and-click adventure genre is dying, *Discworld Noir* is very much alive. It's darker in style than previous *Discworld* games and is all the better for it in our opinion, particularly if you're not a fan of Terry Pratchett's zany, off-the-wall humour. Don't miss it.
PUBLISHER GT Interactive • 020 7258 3791

BLAIR WITCH VOL 1: RUSTIN PARR — PCZ #96 • 86%

As well as being a truly scary action/horror title, this is one of the finest action/adventure games we've played. The suspense is incredible, and a constant stream of jump-out-of-your-seat moments will leave you with a distinct lack of clean underwear.
PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900

THE NOMAD SOUL — PCZ #83 • 86%

Distinctly odd, but original, *The Nomad Soul* is a huge, intricate world populated by lap-dancers and David Bowie. At turns adventure, beat 'em up and platformer, it's insanely ambitious and almost manages to pull it off.
PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000

INDIANA JONES AND THE INFERNAL MACHINE — PCZ #84 • 83%

LucasArts moves away from the point-and-click genre and into *Tomb Raider* territory for its latest *Indy*, with the adventure elements still in place.
PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456 7000

METAL GEAR SOLID — PCZ #96 • 82%

Although it's been ported pretty much identically from the console version (with a few graphical improvements), *MGS*'s tense gameplay, well-designed levels and variety of challenging bosses makes it stand out from the majority of similar PC titles.
PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000

MESSIAH — PCZ #85 • 81%

Shiny's wonderful shooter features a chubby cherub, but also a bunch of whores and lots of gratuitous swearing. As Bob, under-age agent of God, you must possess people's bodies and, like a good and typically hypocritical Christian, kill everything that gets in your way.
PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666

RESIDENT EVIL 3: NEMESIS — PCZ #94 • 81%

Not a vast improvement on its predecessor, but unlike most PS conversions, you can pump up the resolution as high as you want it. The usual array of zombies are joined by more special monsters and it keeps the George Romero spirit alive – or dead.
PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000

RUNE — PCZ #97 • 79%

NEW ENTRY A combination of simple puzzle solving and hack and slash violence, *Rune* is one of the most frenetic action/adventure games in years. If mindless violence and platform gaming are your thing, then you won't be disappointed.
PUBLISHER Take 2 • 01753 722900

NOCTURNE — PCZ #84 • 77%

Why would you pay good money to be scared? Because it's damn good fun, and if you find the average PC game laughable, we dare you to sit through *Nocturne* with your curtains drawn. It's a beautiful exercise in computer-generated fear.
PUBLISHER Take 2 • 01753 722900

RACING GAMES

MIDTOWN MADNESS

PCZ #96 • 84%

Buckle up for some high-speed driving action, as you race around the streets of London and San Francisco in this fantastic sequel. You won't find a more entertaining arcade driving game for the PC. The original *MM* was a belter, but with more cars and races, and improved controls, *MM2* is the new daddy.
PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000

F1 CHAMPIONSHIP: SEASON 2000 — PCZ #97 · 82%

NEW ENTRY While lacking the detailed realism of *GP3*, EA's latest F1 offering provides more fun and adrenaline pumping moments than any other PC F1 game. With its mixture of arcade action and realism it is both accurate and easy to pick up.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549 442

COLIN MCRAE RALLY — PCZ #68 • 82%

Sporting an updated *TOCA* engine, *Colin McRae* is still the benchmark in rally simulations. It boasts realistic handling, car customisation and stacks of multiplayer options, which all contribute to keeping it well ahead of its rivals. It's now available as a budget title, which makes it an absolute steal.
PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

LE MANS 24 HOURS — PCZ #87 • 81%

Although not quite as challenging as the race it's based on, *Le Mans 24 Hours* is a driving game for skillful players who know their brakes from their elbows. You can even get involved in a rewarding career mode, culminating in the famous race itself.
PUBLISHER Infogrames • 020 7738 8199

GRAND PRIX 3 — PCZ #94 · 80%

This F1 title displays all the customary Crammond perfectionism. The detail is amazing, which makes it all the more puzzling as to why there is no team work. Don't expect much more than a 3D accelerated *GP2*, but if that's what you're after you'll love it.
PUBLISHER Hasbro Interactive • 020 8569 1234

INSANE — PCZ #97 · 78%

NEW ENTRY Primarily an online racing game, *Insane* allows you and your friends to indulge in some off-road racing mayhem in a range of different vehicles. Its wide selection of races will have you in hysterics, but the novelty does wear off pretty quickly.
PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

NEED FOR SPEED PORSCHE 2000 — PCZ #90 • 78%

Not as good as hooking up with your mates at the arcade, but still a damn good conversion of a damn fine game. Forget realism and concentrate on flinging your car around the track as fast as you can. Who needs depth when racing is this exciting?
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

RALLY MASTERS — PCZ #89 • 77%

Rally games tend to blend into one another quite seamlessly. After all, the cars look exactly the same and they go round the same tracks. *Rally Masters*, however, offers the all-important feel of a great driving game together with loads of options and some tasty graphics.
PUBLISHER Infogrames • 020 7738 8199

TOCA 2 — PCZ #76 • 76%

Predictably, Codemasters has gone and done it again. More cars, more tracks and the same stunning attention to detail make *TOCA 2* an essential purchase for petrolheads. Graphically, it may not be a massive improvement, but gameplay-wise it definitely is.
PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP — PCZ #84 • 75%

Close, but no *McRae*. That was the verdict from the boy Hill on this new racer. It looks fantastic and the on-screen Ordnance Survey map is a nice touch, but it's let down by some poor camera angles and unnecessarily solid obstacles. Ouch.
PUBLISHER Actualise • 01625 855015

FLIGHT SIMULATORS

FALCON 4

PCZ #72 • 89%

We waited patiently for years for this title to arrive, and the good news is that, for once, we weren't disappointed. *Falcon 4* sports beautiful 3D-accelerated graphics and a dynamic campaign structure that leaves the competition standing. If you're going to buy one flight sim, make it this one – we guarantee that you won't be disappointed.
PUBLISHER MicroProse • 01454 893893

B-17 FLYING FORTRESS: THE MIGHTY 8TH — PCZ #96 • 87%

B17 reproduces the experience of piloting a WWII bomber. Everything's covered, from planning missions to dropping bombs. A must for WWII and realism freaks.
PUBLISHER Hasbro Interactive/Microprose • 01454 893 893

COMBAT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2 — PCZ #97 · 87%

NEW ENTRY If WWII dog fighting is your thing, then this is the game you've been waiting for. Its excellent user interface, engrossing campaigns, intense combat and superb graphics create a real sense of excitement and realism.
PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000

F-22 TOTAL AIR WAR — PCZ #68 • 85%

This full-price new version of DID's masterpiece may seem a bit of a rip-off for anyone who already owns *F-22 ADF*, but those of you who are looking to buy one of the greatest combat sims of recent years should seriously consider this title.
PUBLISHER Ocean/DID • 0161 832 6633

F/A-18E SUPER HORNET — PCZ #83 • 84%

If you like your flight sims to be realistic with a great big capital 'R', look no further. In fact, this game is so life-like that the US navy has adopted it for promotional work and ground-based familiarity training. But make sure you watch out for friendly fire.
PUBLISHER Titus Software • 01926 335 5400

MIG ALLEY — PCZ #80 • 84%

MiG Alley gives hardcore flight simmers' piloting skills a run for their money, but don't let that put you off. If you're willing to put in the work, this title will repay you with a wealth of excellent in-flight graphics and a selection of brilliant mission-planning elements.
PUBLISHER Empire Interactive • 020 8343 7337

FLIGHT UNLIMITED III — PCZ #82 • 83%

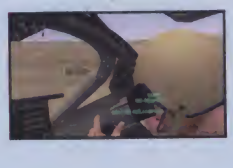
For all those sim aficionados who enjoy the experience of flying for its own sake rather than as a lame excuse for blasting other flying things to bits, this (along with the *Flight Sim* series) is an object of worship and devotion. It certainly deserves high praise.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

CRIMSON SKIES — PCZ #96 • 82%

This game moves away from the detailed simulation mould of so many plane games, and concentrates more on all out dogfighting. It's instantly gratifying, fast paced, entertaining and adds a much needed twist of humour to an otherwise serious genre.
PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000

FLANKER 2.0 — PCZ #85 • 82%

Hardcore pilots with a taste for Yankie blood need look no further. Extremely hard to fly, but very rewarding nevertheless, *Flanker 2.0* recreates the real thing in minute detail. However, be warned: hours of practice are needed before you can go off shooting stuff.
PUBLISHER SSI • 01293 651300



ENEMY ENGAGED: COMANCHE HOKUM — PCZ #89 • 82%

The latest helicopter sim to hit the shelves, it is also the best one to date. In no other game do you feel the excitement of being involved in a real war, largely due to an excellent dynamic campaign mode.
PUBLISHER Empire Interactive • 020 8343 7337

SPORTS

FIFA 2001

PCZ #97 · 83%

NEW ENTRY Once again the FIFA franchise gets its yearly make over. There are only minor improvements over the last version – *Euro 2000* – but this doesn't stop it from being the best football game for the PC. The player animations and presentation are immaculate, and it's a must buy if you didn't purchase *FIFA 2000* or *Euro 2000*, but not worth it if you already own them.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

SUPREME SNOWBOARDING — PCZ #85 • 83%

Snowboarding is not a sport you'd expect to captivate a PC audience, but this game gives as exhilarating an experience as you could hope for without breaking a leg. Oh, and all the streetwise attitude you'd expect, of course.
PUBLISHER Infogrames • 020 8738 8199

PGA CHAMPIONSHIP GOLF 2000 — PCZ #92 • 82%

It's really not much different from last year's title, but this edition has enough subtle tweaks to make it a worthy purchase. It also has the best control system we've seen in what is definitely the best golf game available.
PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100

NBA LIVE 2000 — PCZ #85 • 82%

As slick as always, but what makes this special is the inclusion of teams from the '50s onwards, comedy haircuts and all. It's not quite as immediate as *Inside Drive*, it's a more complete simulation of the sport all round.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

OPEN TENNIS 2000 — PCZ #92 • 81%

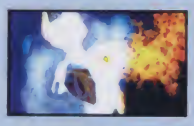
Not since *Super Tennis* on the SNES have we had so much fun hitting a ball over a net. After some initial reluctance, the whole office stopped fragging and started lobbing. Very playable and unsurpassed in multiplayer.
PUBLISHER Cryo • 0121 250 5070

SPACE COMBAT

X – BEYOND THE FRONTIER

PCZ #82 • 87%

The spirit of *Elite* lives on in this massive trading epic from Germany, in which you must buy and fight your way back home to Earth. The combat side of the gameplay may not be the best on offer, but with goods to trade and races to discover, it rewards patience with variety and months of play. This title is deeply hypnotic and beautiful, rather than tense and frenetic.
PUBLISHER THQ • 01483 767656

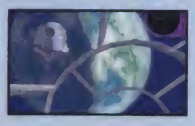


TERMINUS — PCZ #93 • 86%

Who says the days of independent bedroom programming are over? *Terminus* proves you can make a great game on your own if you have the talent and the passion. It just edges out *FreeSpace 2*.
PUBLISHER Vicarious Visions • www.vvisions.com

FREESPACE 2 — PCZ #84 • 85%

Completely different from *X*, *FreeSpace 2* offers fast-paced dogfighting action all the way. It boasts a superb interface, epic story and amazing graphics, but it's a bit short-lived if you don't play online.
PUBLISHER Interplay • 020 7551 4222



X-WING: ALLIANCE — PCZ #77 • 81%

At last! Fly the Millennium Falcon in the final episode of the long-running *X-Wing* series. Certainly the best-looking *X-Wing* game to date, *Alliance* is slow at first, but boy does it pick up later on.
PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700

STARLANCER — PCZ #91 • 80%

While *Starlancer* doesn't do anything startlingly new, it is a highly polished affair with compulsive gameplay and gorgeous visuals. A must for space sim fans.
PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002 000

MANAGEMENT

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER: 00/01

PCZ #96 • 93%

This update for the greatest management game ever, sees the series improve yet again. New features include increased media involvement, greater backroom staff participation, a live league table and more player information. All this adds to the game's addictiveness, which will once again drain you of your free time and take over your life.
PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000

THE SIMS — PCZ #87 • 85%

This game offers a staggering amount of possibilities. Essentially, you create your own person, or family, and guide them through the ups and downs of life. It's the definitive docu-soap and makes for compelling gameplay.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

CAESAR III — PCZ #70 • 84%

Starting from scratch, you've got to build a majestic Roman city and ensure a harmonious life for your citizens. So what? So it's utterly absorbing and probably the most addictive god sim in existence.
PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100

SIMCITY 3000 — PCZ #74 • 83%

Ten years on, *SimCity* remains as addictive as it ever was. Little was broken, and little was fixed. With new buildings to try out and an enhanced transport system, *SimCity 3000* is a must for old-timers and new addicts alike.
PUBLISHER Maxis/EA • 01753 549442

ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON — PCZ #75 · 82%

Pack out your own theme park with the most fiendish rides your imagination can conjure up. From rickety wooden dippers to *Nemesis*-style, white-knuckle gurners, *RT* is hugely addictive.
PUBLISHER Hasbro Interactive • 020 8569 1234

3D ACTION/STRATEGY

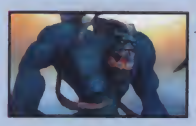
HIDDEN & DANGEROUS

PCZ #79 • 90%

You don't get a second chance in a real war, and *Hidden & Dangerous* is the game that comes closest to putting you in the middle of hell on earth. From the first mission it grabs you by the balls and doesn't let up until you're dead, with a bullet in the head. As a strategic shoot 'em up, games don't get any harder, or more compelling and atmospheric.
PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900

SWAT 3 — PCZ #85 • 87%

Artificial intelligence doesn't get any better than this. Add some truly spectacular graphics, an ingenious command interface and edge-of-your-seat gameplay, and you've got a top title.
PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100

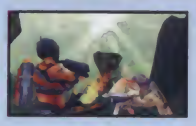


GIANTS — PCZ #95 • 85%

This mammoth and original 3D action/strategy game, includes third-person shooter, RTS, RPG and real-time combat elements. It also features a superbly balanced multiplayer option.
PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666

ROGUE SPEAR — PCZ #84 • 83%

We loved *Rainbow Six* and, although this follow-up can't match *Hidden & Dangerous* for intensity, it's a superb romp through the world of terrorism. Pick your team, kit them out and plan your missions carefully.
PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900



BATTLEZONE 2 — PCZ #84 · 79%

Stunning graphics and a winning blend of strategy and first-person action in this sequel to the highly acclaimed *Battlezone*. The fight for world domination has never looked so good.
PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700

ONLINE ONLY

EVERQUEST: THE RUINS OF KUNARK

PCZ #92• 90%

The combat-oriented online RPG of choice just got a whole lot better with this expansion pack. Chris Anderson has spent months casting spells with hundreds of other people and never stops talking about it, so there must be something special going on. *Ruins Of Kunark* doesn't really offer any radical changes, but in this case bigger really is better.
PUBLISHER Ubi Soft • 020 8944 9000

ALLEGIANCE — PCZ #91 • 82%

The first true online only space combat sim, *Allegiance* is a complex yet rewarding beast. Now you can fly around with hundreds of others, co-ordinating strategies and establishing chains of command.
PUBLISHER Microsoft• 0345 002 000

ASHERON'S CALL — PCZ #88 • 76%

The graphics and freedom to do almost anything make this title a commendable addition to the genre. But, as in real life, it's a great tragedy you can't kill other humans as most of the ones you meet deserve a good kicking.
PUBLISHER Microsoft• 0345 002 000

ULTIMA ONLINE: RENAISSANCE — PCZ #92 • 75%

It's been at the top for a while, but now that the sequel is on the way the original looks dated. *Renaissance* isn't enough of an improvement for it to compete with *EverQuest* – online RPGs are moving on.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

PLANETARION — PCZ #94 · 72%

Available free from the Net, *Planetarion* is the work of three out-of-work Norwegians. A turn-based sci-fi strategy game with minimal graphics, it still manages to absorb you with its playability.
PUBLISHER Planetarion • www.planetarion.com

MODS

COUNTER-STRIKE

PCZ #95 • 93%

They say the best things in life are free, but until *Counter-Strike* arrived in the *ZONE* office we never knew what they were talking about. Not only is *Counter-Strike* the most popular shooter online, it's also the most addictive substance known to man. Don't start playing it if you want to keep your life intact, and don't blame us when you start mouthing the words "Go! Go! Go!" in your sleep.
DOWNLOAD www.counter-strike.net

ROCKET ARENA 3 — PCZ #94 • 89%

Quake III hasn't convinced everyone, but if you want pure deathmatch there's nothing better, especially when you add the *RA3* mod. You start off with full ammo and armour, and fight in specially designed one-on-one arenas. Class.
DOWNLOAD www.planetquake.com/quake3

FIREARMS — PCZ #94 • 81%

Another copy of *Counter-Strike* for *Half-Life*? Well, yes, but *Firearms* looks set to be more epic in scope, with large maps, dozens of weapons to choose from, including grenade launchers, and the dreaded minefields.
DOWNLOAD www.firearmsmod.com

Q3 JAILBREAK — PCZ #92 • 81%

Quite often, the simple things in life are the most satisfying. Take JailBreak. It's Quake 3 with two jails and two sides, but the team-based play adds a balance that's not present in standard deathmatch modes.
DOWNLOAD www.teamreaction.com

STRIKE FORCE V1.4 — PCZ #96 • 83%

Baring more than a passing resemblance to *Tactical Ops*, *Strike Force* is the best *UT* mod available, and if you're looking for something similar to *Counter-Strike* only with bots, look no further.
DOWNLOAD www.planetunreal.com/strikeforce

PCZONE ALL-TIME CLASSICS

DOOM

This is the game that needs no introduction. Without *Doom* we wouldn't have had *Quake*, *Unreal Tournament* or *Half-Life*. Every time you play a first-person shooter you should take five minutes to pay homage to the game that changed the world as we know it. *Doom*, we thank you.

ULTIMA VII

Still the best of all the *Ultima* games, and probably the finest RPG ever seen on a PC. The graphics might be old-hat, but the gameplay certainly isn't. *Ultima VII* blends exploration and character interaction, and it's the last title in the *Ultima* series to give complete party control.

ULTIMA UNDERWORLD

We reviewed this game back in the first issue of *PC ZONE*. It was a landmark RPG then and it's still a landmark RPG now, although the graphics obviously look a bit tired and dated. Do we think it's the best RPG ever? Almost, but not quite. Cast your eyes up the mag a couple of inches for the answer to that question.

DUNE II

If you know your strategy, you'll know that *Dune II* is the game that's done more than any of its rivals to define the genre as we know it today. The 2000 update was disappointing, but only because it didn't add anything new. The fact that it still plays better than many new titles is testament to its staying power.

SENSIBLE WORLD OF SOCCER

EA's *FIFA* series might look the part, but we're convinced that *Sensible Soccer* was and is the ultimate example of gameplay over presentation. With its famous top-down view, *Sensible* offers fast frantic action that does more to replicate the real-life game than any of its predecessors.

UFO: ENEMY UNKNOWN

This game came out of nowhere and took the world by storm. Compelling strategy, tense turn-based battles and a myriad of research options made this the most addictive game ever upon its arrival. Subsequent sequels were just as addictive, but this is the game that originally captured our hearts.

MAGIC CARPET

Drawing gasps of amazement from everyone who saw it, Bullfrog's *Magic Carpet* was one of the most original and inventive games to be released in the early days of 3D. So original, in fact, that it never got the recognition it deserved. We still think the blend of action and strategy was spot-on.

WING COMMANDER

The original space combat game spawned the first big-budget PC series. In fact, the *Wing Commander* series was so hugely successful that they went and made a film. Inevitably, this was absolute rubbish and the public stayed away in their millions. Will these people never learn?

TOMB RAIDER

She might be getting a bit rusty round the gills, but when Lara first bounced onto the small screen, we fell in love with her instantly. 3D action adventure games haven't been the same since and at the time nothing could touch it. Do you remember your first encounter with the T-Rex?

CIVILIZATION

The original and some say the best turn-based strategy game. When *Civilization* first appeared, it was hailed correctly as the first game that changed and evolved depending on how you played it. Recent versions have presented more of the same, but in this case that is definitely no bad thing.

EXTENDEDPLAY

This month, we're donning our stretch-lycra outfits to pore over add-on goodies for Raven Software's *Star Trek* themed fragfest *Voyager: Elite Force*. This game has more appeal than one of Seven of Nine's tightest eye-popping outfits... and that's saying something

BEAMING UP Tony Lamb

TRY IT YOURSELF

ON THE CD

On this month's cover CD we've got all the maps mentioned in these pages. To try any of them out all you have to do is unzip the map .pk3 files into the 'BaseEF' sub-directory of wherever you have installed Elite Force. Then just select single-player holomatch, create a game and select the map of your choice. It's as simple as that. Remember also to check out the .txt files that come with the maps – you'll find out who the authors are and details of the work that went into them

"This game has it all, with *Quake III*'s visuals, a hugely popular theme, single and multiplayer options and Seven of Nine in improbably figure-hugging outfits. It's fab"

STAR TREK VOYAGER: ELITE FORCE

'Space' games have always been popular, and one of the longest running themes has been based around the hugely successful *Star Trek* series and its various spin-offs – of which *Voyager* is the latest installment. Some older readers might remember the early *Star Trek* videogame attempts from 15-odd years ago, in which half a dozen letters floated lazily around the screen representing not only the Starship Enterprise but also your Klingon enemy, planets and even your photon torpedoes. They were crap, but we loved them.

Truth be told, there have been a fair number of other very average *Star Trek* games too, but now developers have the likes of id Software's superb *Quake III* engine to work with, and blindingly good it is too. Where *Quake III Arena* fell down in many fans' eyes was in its lack of a single-player option. Multiplayer is great – the way of the future perhaps – but many people wanted the single-player alternative and felt that id had strayed too far into the other camp. What somebody needed to do was come up with a *Quake III* clone with a single-player game too. Suddenly – hey presto – along came Raven Software and *Voyager: Elite Force* was born.

This game has it all, with *Quake III*'s visuals and levels of action, a hugely popular and instantly recognisable theme, single and multiplayer options and, of course, the aforementioned Seven of Nine in improbably figure-hugging outfits. It's fab.

RESISTANCE IS FUTILE

Filename: *meteor.zip*
Size: 1,083Kb
Rating: ✪✪✪

Resistance gives *Voyager* fans what they've been after for ages – one-on-one action with Seven of Nine. It's a small map with only you and the aerodynamic Seven there to keep you company, but she's a persistent sort of lass, so you can't afford to let your guard drop for a moment. The map features a medium-sized arena but the layout – a series of precipitous rocks, boulders and escarpments – is quite original. Weapons and health are dotted around aplenty, and worth remembering is that all of the teleports will send you to the top of the map where the best vantage points lie. Unfortunately, the size of the map and its layout means it is quite possible to lose your opponent as you both run around trying to find each other. This can be remedied by frequent use of the teleports to get to the top of the map, but does hinder your enjoyment of the battle a bit. One trick worth mentioning, however, is to overrule the standard set-up and add as many enemy bots as the map will take. This will guarantee absolute mayhem and some really frantic action. It would also be interesting if the map was made into a larger CTF layout and given some longer fields of fire. It would probably do quite well.

I'm sorry, I seem to be lost for words...

CASTLE OF DEATH

Filename: *cdeath_ef.zip*
Size: 926Kb
Rating: ✪✪✪

Castle Of Death is a fun, action-packed map and can be played either as a free-for-all or team deathmatch. It's fairly simple – a castle layout with an outdoor courtyard, tower and an underground 'basement' level. It's worth your while to run up the stairs on the first 'floor' up from the courtyard – there is a weapons boost up there – and this will help you a lot, assuming you can get back down quickly enough before the effect wears off. In the basement you'll find a temporary invisibility power-up and this is reached via a moving platform over a lava lake. This seems irresistible to the bots however, and while it becomes a rich target environment for you to do some killing, you might well find yourself stranded when you've grabbed the power-up only to find a bot hogging the platform and unwilling to get off. This is only a minor glitch, but annoying as it leaves you as a sitting duck.

Bridges are dangerously open to enemy fire – run fast!

GEOTHERMAL STATION

Fragging under the stars. There's nothing quite like it...

The castle dungeons are positively medieval.

GEOTHERMAL STATION

Filename: *ctf_geothermal.zip*
Size: 967Kb
Rating: ✪✪✪

The second map from Raven Software is another medium-sized Capture The Flag-style battleground, but can also be played as a team deathmatch or free-for-all fragfest. The layout

SPYGLASS

I think this guy just winked at me...

is classic CTF – two bases face each other with only a pair of bridges between them and a fiery death awaits anyone unfortunate enough to fall into the lava below. Weapons are spread liberally around and there is plenty of armour and health to be grabbed on the bridges – which is just what you need when you're trying to escape with a flag. There are also suitable sniper points covering both bridges to watch out for, and the clear fields of fire make fast movement and lots of dodging the order of the day. A good map for a team that communicates well and can cover a runner who wants to go for the flag. Up to 12 players can enjoy this map at once.

Janeway eliminated. If only...

PADGALLERY

Filename: *efpadgallery.zip*
Size: 6,456Kb
Rating: ✪✪✪✪✪

Jumping into this map was something of an eye opener. How on earth did Padman come up with the idea of having *Voyager* characters fragging their way around an art gallery? Whatever was going through his mind, however, it certainly works superbly, as either a free-for-all melee or team deathmatch arena. The map is rich in detail, from the phones in the foyer that ring when you go near them to the mouthwatering selection of pictures of Seven of Nine actress Jeri Ryan that adorn one wing of the building. The map oozes class and while it might not have the true-to-storyline feel of the Spyglass or Borg Unimatrix maps (you could play any *Counter-Strike* clone in here quite happily, for example), it makes for great fun. The opportunity to blast the ever more annoying Captain Janeway to pulp on an art gallery floor is something that the TV series makers really should have considered by now. And as for all those pictures of Jeri Ryan – if you're a fan, you'll never play another *Elite Force* map again.

Padgallery is so different, and just so damned good.

SPYGLASS

Filename: *ctf_spyglass.zip*
Size: 423Kb
Rating: ✪✪✪

Spyglass is a good medium-sized map that can be played as either a Capture The Flag free-for-all or team deathmatch level. The surroundings are pure *Star Trek*, from the computer control panels on the walls to the whopping great force field in the middle of the map. The central force field rules out almost all sniping opportunities and means that action tends to be up close and frantic, which will appeal to *Quake III* fans in bucketloads. This is one of the maps from Jeremy Statz at Raven Software – and it shows.

You'd never guess that the author is a Jeri Ryan fan!

Top class Capture The Flag action, but no sniping.

DEFIANT

Filename: *defiant.zip*
Size: 2,309Kb
Rating: ✪✪

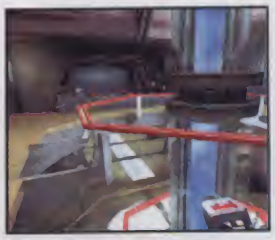
This map was unusual in that once installed it didn't appear in the usual list of choices when looked for under holomatch options. Instead, it had to be called up by entering 'map defiant' in the console and configured afterwards. This, allied with a couple of nasty video glitches, which seemed to centre around getting stuck in lift shafts, was a tad annoying and cost what is otherwise a reasonable map valuable review points. Set on the starship Defiant, the map is a through-the-corridors blastabout where almost every battle comes as a surprise. Enemies appear out of nowhere and set about killing you with undisguised glee. There are a couple of areas with ladders and for some reason there seems to be an enemy at the top of every one – so remember to look up. The faults that cropped up on this map were a shame, but don't write it off – no two PCs ever seem to work the same way – give it a whirl first.

The Defiant map has too many corridors, not enough interest

ALERT

Filename: *Alert.zip*
Size: 3,150kb
Rating: ✪✪✪✪

Alert is another map that needs to be started from the game console before configuration, but thankfully makes up for the faults displayed in its brother file Defiant. Set on board Voyager and featuring a number of instantly recognisable locations (you can even walk onto an 'unused' holodeck or wander around the engineering section), Alert is mainly a corridor and small-room battleground. Luckily, although the lack of any open spaces is a limitation in itself the sheer realism of the map shines through and you could be forgiven for thinking that this is part of the original game. The map fails to hit the five star level because it doesn't quite have the sparkle of Unimatrix or Padgallery, and lacks some larger fighting areas, but it's definitely well worth installing.


"It's Engineering and the engines cannae take it Captain." Oops, wrong film...

BORG UNIMATRIX

Filename: *borg210.zip*
Size: 2,058Kb
Rating: ✪✪✪✪✪

The Borg Unimatrix is an exciting blend of open arenas, enclosed corridors and cleverly placed weapons and armour. It's well thought out – enemies can appear around corners or from lift wells at any moment – which guarantees fast-paced action. The map looks great too, with an imaginative layout, cool lighting and a Borg cube in the sky. Unimatrix has a lot of corridors but is the right size to avoid a claustrophobic feeling. Some of the teleport locations are a little strange, but this is a minor niggle when all of the map's plus points are taken into account.

A typically Borg environment.

NET ADDRESSES

So far, although there are lots of fan sites for *Elite Force*, there aren't a huge number of extra maps to download. In fact, we've got the pick of the bunch here (if not just about all of them at the time of writing) but then this is quite a new game so we may have to be patient. Our very own Mr Hill reviewed *Elite Force* only a few months ago and gave it an excellent 84 per cent, which must surely be enough to inspire the mappers on to bigger and better things. Keep checking out these websites for the latest maps, skins and other *Elite Force* goodies...

www.pczone.co.uk
Your first point of reference should be the *PC ZONE* website. It features an extensive download section, so chances are you'll find everything you need right here.

www.ravensoft.com
The home of the creators of *Voyager: Elite Force*. Here you'll find the demos of the game, get technical support and find out about other Raven products. The dedicated *Elite Force* pages are stuffed full with the latest *EF* news, previews, screenshots and lots more.

www.voyagereliteforce.com
This site bills itself as "Your first stop for official *Voyager: Elite Force* news, maps, walkthroughs, interviews, files, forums..." etc. You get the picture.

www.eliteforce.net
A nicely sized site with maps, crew details, art, screenshots and lots more. The maps section is kept well up to date and is always worth a visit.

www.padman.de
The homepage of Padman, creator of the Padgallery map. He's usually a *Quake III Arena* mapper, but thank goodness he's started doing *Elite Force* stuff too. Hopefully he's going to do more so keep an eye on this page.

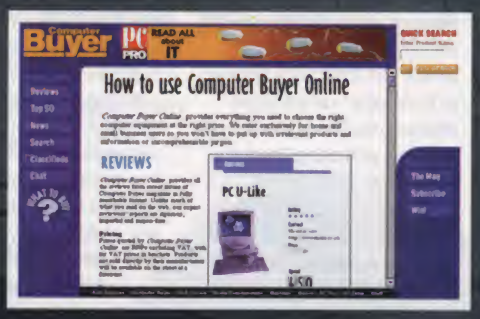
www.startrek.com
Oh come on, surely we don't have to tell you what you'll find here...

www.computerbuyer.co.uk

Computer Buyer

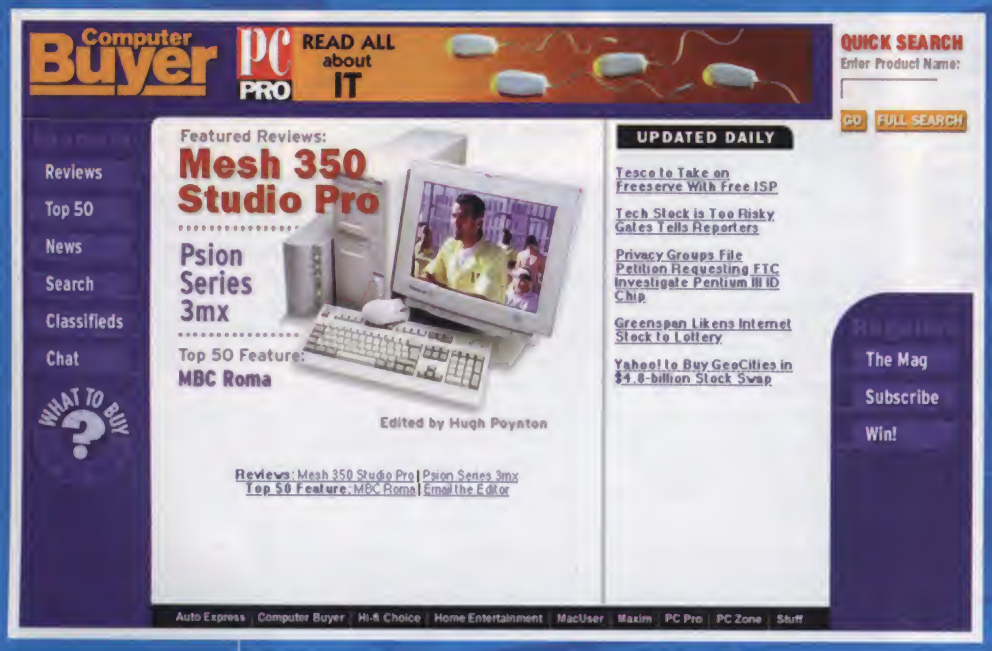
Top 50: The best value PCs, printers, software and peripherals money can buy

Reviews: Over 2000 jargon free verdicts on PC hardware, software and peripherals



Buy Right: How to use the site to buy with confidence

What to buy and how to buy it



Featuring:

- Top 50 products
- Daily news
- 2000 reviews
- Tech support
- Chat
- Buy right!
- Competitions

CHAT
Your technical questions answered on-line

ONTHECD

Want to test out the best games before parting with your cash? Here you go then

WORDS Martin Korda DISC Alan Stonebridge

HELP!

CD trouble? Don't worry – phone our helpline and sort yourself out pronto!

CD-ROM HELP Phone Interchange on 0152 5711 482 any weekday between 9.30am and 5pm, and Saturday from 10am to 2pm, **or email pc_zone@interchange.co.uk**. Please do NOT phone the *PC ZONE* office. Thanks.

BEFORE YOU DIAL... If you are calling the helpline, please take note of the following points

- If possible, have your PC operating and near the phone when you call.
- If this is not possible, note down all relevant information – ie system type, sound card, RAM and so on – plus the nature of the fault.
- Make sure you have a pen and paper to hand when you call so you can jot down the relevant info.

MINIMUM SPECIFICATION

- You need at least a Pentium 266 with 32Mb RAM to run the software on this month's CD-ROM.
- Many of the programs on our cover CD-ROM are designed to run under Windows 95/98 and, as a result, some of them may require a Pentium II 300 with 64Mb RAM to run satisfactorily. Please note that some games also require a 3D accelerator card to run.
- Use the browser and menu system to see which demos are 3D-accelerator only.

ON THE CD **DEMOS**

SEVERANCE: BLADE OF DARKNESS

Codemasters

EXCLUSIVE

It's just a flesh wound.

Half-day closing at Boots can be a real nightmare sometimes.

Looks like a friendly sort of chap.

Those of you who remember the old arcade classic *Golden Axe* will be instantly familiar with the concept behind our first exclusive demo this month, *Severance: Blade Of Darkness*.

After taking charge of the only character on offer, a King's knight called Sargon, you have to break out of a dungeon in which you're being held captive and defeat the evil Ragnor. However, before you get to give the big man himself a good drubbing, you're going to have to fight your way through his minions. While your character specialises in fighting with one-handed swords and shields, you'll find that he can also use any limbs that he's hacked off his opponents, be it an arm (used as a club) or a head (an excellent projectile).

With some of the most stunning visuals ever seen in a computer game, we're sure you'll find *Blade*'s all-out action gameplay as entertaining as we did. To find out more about it, turn to page 60 and read our world-exclusive review.

Controls	Mouse and keyboard
Move character	NumPad and mouse
Attack	Left mouse button
Run	Double tap forward
Throw	Delete
Use	Enter
Select object	Page Down

PROJECT IGI

Eidos

EXCLUSIVE

In *Project IGI* you play David Llewelyn Jones, a one-man counter-nuclear terrorism unit.

Dropped far behind enemy lines, you'll have to infiltrate a Russian base, disable all the security systems and then scoot with the designated goods. However, unlike so many other FPSs, you're going to need to think just as much as you're going to need an accurate shot. Sneak around, avoid cameras and take out enemies from a distance and you'll find that your chances of succeeding are far greater.

With wide-open areas for you to explore, your scope for tactics and stealth are nearly infinite, and it's this which makes *Project IGI* stand out from the crowd. Give it a go and see for yourself.

Project IGI uses D3D to render the game. While the demo will support many other graphics cards, some graphical inconsistencies may be encountered if you use a graphics card not listed: (GeForce 1 and 2, NVIDIA TNT chipset, Matrox G200, G400 and above, Voodoo 3 and above, ATI 128 and above.) The *Project IGI* demo will run on a PII300 and above. A PIII is recommended.

Controls Mouse and keyboard

Right in the jugular.

OK soldier, let's see how fast you can change this tyre.

ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND

Activision

I did warn you that the chilli sauce was on the frisky side.

Can anyone smell burning?

Guybrush's house gets stoned.

After marrying the beautiful and vivacious Governor Elaine Marley, hero of the *Monkey Island* series, Guybrush Threepwood returns with his bride to Melee™ Island. However, when they arrive, all is not well. Elaine has been declared dead and her house is in the process of being demolished. Meanwhile, a suspiciously familiar-looking politician is about to take her job.

This fourth instalment of the *Monkey Island* series sees a return to form for LucasArts, after the slightly dodgy *Curse Of Monkey Island*. There are some great puzzles to try your hand at here and you can walk round the island, and get to know some of the charismatic characters.

The demo serves as the perfect introduction to the full version and fans of the series will love it, while newcomers will find it instantly likeable and easy to play.

Controls	Keyboard
Move	NumPad
Look at	E, C or S
Use\talk to	U
Skip dialogue line	Del
Pick up	P
Enter inventory	I
Menu	F1
Select item	P and Enter

COUNTER-STRIKE V1.0

The Counter-Strike Team

OK Sir, you might just feel a small stabbing pain in your head when I do this.

Unless you've just returned from a prolonged vacation to the South Pole, you'll already know that *Counter-Strike* needs no introduction. After months of painstakingly playing beta versions (it's been hell, honest), the final version is now ready to go.

And here it is, on this month's CD, which means an end to the frustration of trying to download it off the Internet, waiting patiently as your crappy 56K modem chugs away for hours. In just a couple of minutes, you could be playing the world's best and favourite online shooter with people you've never met from around the globe.

This version contains new models and animations, as well as a couple of extra weapons. So get installing, start shooting and kiss your life goodbye.

Controls	Mouse and keyboard
Move and aim	Mouse and keyboard
Drop item	G
Flash light	F
Select item	Number keys

Out of time, Mr VIP.

Counter-Strike 1.0 has a couple of new weapons for you to try out.

ZEUS: MASTER OF OLYMPUS

Sierra

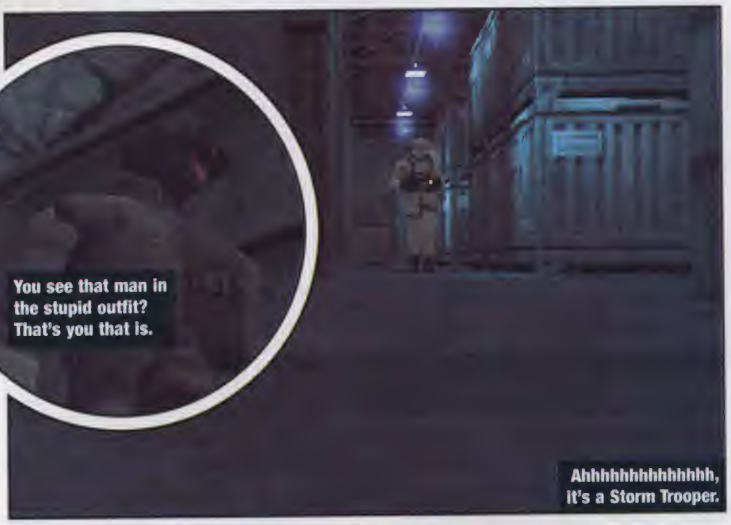
Set in ancient Greece, *Zeus: Master Of Olympus* puts you in charge of a small town which you have to build up into the most powerful and prosperous city in the known world. It's a micro-management/city-building affair, in the mould of *Caesar III* and *Theocracy*.

The storyline in the demo sees the town's hero, Perseus, setting off on an adventure and putting you in charge of proceedings while he's gone. You'll have to keep a close eye on resources and make sure you cater for your people's needs by providing facilities for philosophy, drama, athletics, culture and housing. Completing certain goals will trigger off other options or events, such as winning the Pan-Hellenic games, which will enable Zeus to come to the city.

The demo provides plenty of engrossing gameplay, which is challenging for veterans but also accessible to newbies.

Controls Mouse and keyboard

Better get the riot police in.



You see that man in the stupid outfit? That's you that is.

Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhh, it's a Storm Trooper.

METAL GEAR SOLID

Microsoft

The PlayStation hit gets an airing on the PC, and a damn fine game it is, too. On the CD you'll find the first part of the game, which comes just after the hauntingly atmospheric intro.

Hailed by many as the first ever sneak 'em up game, never has a title required so much stealth, cunning and patience. Of course, your first instinct is to jump out and beat the shit out of all the guards, but this urge soon passes once you've died within the first minute of play for the 13th time on the trot.

Watch out for the guards' patrol patterns and always keep an eye on your map to check on their current position and line of sight. Do this and you should have no trouble completing the demo.

Controls	Keyboard
Move	keypad or NumPad
First-person view	X (double tap to stay)
Weapon	Ctrl
Action	Space
Crawl	Shift
Switch item	Q
Inventory items	A
Switch weapon	W
Inventory	S
Select\radio	Tab

COSSACKS: EUROPEAN WARS

CDV

From the developers of *Sudden Strike*, *Cossacks: European Wars* bears more than a passing similarity to *AOEII*. Set in Europe during the 16th and 17th centuries when new nations were constantly being created and old ones destroyed, you must form an army and vanquish your enemies.

Set in real time, you can test yourself against four difficulty levels on any number of random maps. If the computer gets all too predictable, you and some friends can play a multiplayer deathmatch game instead.

Controls Mouse and keyboard

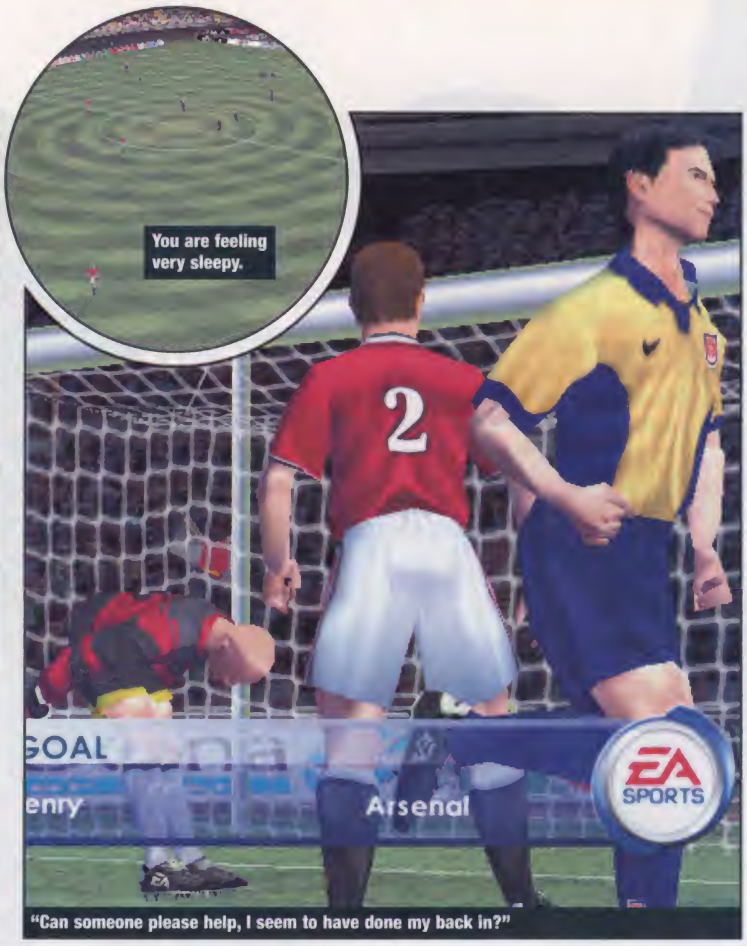
THE SETTLERS: SMACK A THIEF

Blue Byte

What can I possibly say about this? Using the graphics from *Settlers IV*, the gameplay consists of, errr, smacking a thief whenever he tries to steal gold from you. This is done by placing the cursor (an open hand) over the pesky rogues and clicking the left mouse button in order to slap them. Do it enough times and you can do it all over again on another level.

It's strangely addictive, honestly. No really, honestly... Would I lie to you?

Controls Mouse



"Can someone please help, I seem to have done my back in?"

FIFA 2001

EA

Up to four people can play at once, as long as you've got three gamepads and a keyboard. The only game available is an exhibition between Manchester United and Arsenal (so not so much an exhibition as an all-out brawl).

The graphics have been updated since the last version and the crowd sound far more realistic. To see what other changes you can find since *FIFA 2000*, install the demo and give it a go.

Whether you find many nuances or not, you're sure to find that *FIFA 2001* is the best football game currently available for your PC.

Controls	Gamepad or keyboard
Move players	NumPad or gamepad
Shoot	D
Lob	A
Switch player	S
Sprint	W

ON THE CD PATCHES

All the latest patches for all your favourite games

Unreal Tournament 432
European Wars: Cossacks – Demo Patch
Panzer General 3: Scorches Earth
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 2 v1.01
Rune 1.01
Sudden Strike Patch
X-Tension 1.5 to 1.6 beta
X-Tension 1.1 to 1.5 beta
Half-Life 1.1.0.1 to 1.1.0.4
Unreal Tournament 436

ON THE CD ONLINE

Make the net work for you

Claranet
Sign up now to the UK's largest independent Internet Service Provider

Datum Online
Find your next job online with Datum Online

ON THE CD EXTENDED PLAY

Turn to page 144, where Tony Lamb will tell you all about this month's collection of *Star Trek: Voyager Elite Force* levels.

gameplay™

THE GATEWAY TO GAMES

ONLY £28.99

FREE DELIVERY

The perennial pirate wannabe Guybrush Threepwood along with his new bride Governor Elaine Marley Threepwood return to Melle Island to find that Elaine has been declared dead and the Governor's mansion is to be demolished. Featuring a world rendered in 3D and dozens of gorgeously rendered backdrops, Escape From Monkey Island is threaded with monkey humour and pirates. Let the adventuring begin!

All Trademarks and Copyrights Acknowledged.

Sacrifice is an epic no-holds-barred 3D Real Time Strategy game with strong RPG elements. Take control of powerful wizards, armies of creatures, and utilize a myriad of spells and incantations to wreak havoc across a revolutionary 3D landscape. With vast worlds of clearly viewed terrain, multiple landscape designs, unlimited camera angles, and over 50 different kinds of fantastic creatures at your command, Sacrifice will be the new benchmark against which all other RTS games are measured.

ONLY £28.99

● Free delivery on orders over £19.99 ● Full 10 day no quibble returns policy

SALES HOTLINE 0845 20 10 444

STORES STORES Retail

WEB SITE www.gameplay.com

TV TV Interactive

WAP PHONE http://mobile.gameplay.com

PLEASE QUOTE THIS REFERENCE WHEN ORDERING PCY(1)

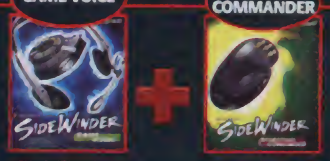
gameplay™

THE GATEWAY TO GAMES

www.gameplay.com

● full 10 day no quibble returns policy see our website for details

£28.99* + £22.99 = ONLY £49.99 Plus £10 Cashback*



£46.99 + £54.99 = ONLY £89.99 Save £11.99

£28.99* + £22.99 + MICROSOFT SIDEWINDER STRATEGIC COMMANDER £54.99 = ONLY £99.99 Save £6.98 Plus £10 Cashback*

*Age of Empires II The Age of Kings Includes a special £10 cashback offer!

CD ROM GAMES

ONLY £28.99

Free Limited Edition Strategy Guide Included. While stocks last.

ONLY £27.99

NOW ON DVD ROM £29.99

ONLY £28.99

ONLY £8.99

ONLY £9.99

ONLY £28.99

ONLY £28.99

ONLY £28.99

ONLY £28.99

ONLY £27.99

Action Man Survival Kit	£18.99
Age of Empires II The Age of Kings (£10 Cash Back offer)	£27.99
Age of Empires II The Conquerors (Expansion Pack)	£22.99
Age of Empires Gold	£20.99
Age of Wonders	£26.99
Air Combat Pack - Air Warrior 2, Flight Unlimited, F22, Apache, A-10 Cobra, Hind, Silent Thunder	£9.99
Airport Inc.	£19.99
Airport 2000 Vol 2	£21.99
Alien Crossfire	£14.99
Alien V Predator	£28.99
Alpha Centauri	£10.99
Amiga Emulator CD (100s of Amiga games)	£12.99
Armoured Fist 3	£16.99
Balders Gate 2	£28.99
Balders Gate 2 DVD ROM	£29.99
Battletech Mechcommander	£17.99
Battlezone	£10.99
Battlezone 2	£25.99
Beau Jolly Compilation 1 - Civilisation, F16, Carmageddon, Network Q, Earthworm Jim	£18.99
Beetle Crazy Cup	£21.99
Best of Driver	£8.99
Best of Unreal Tournament	£8.99
Biggest Names Best Games - Need for Speed 2, Dark Omen, Theme Hospital, Dungeon Keeper, Sim2000	£22.99
Biggest Names Best Games 2 - FIFA 98, Need for Speed 3, Die Hard Trilogy, Tiger Woods 99, Future Cop, Trespasser	£18.99
Blood 2: The Chosen	£8.99
Braveheart	£27.99
Brian Lara Cricket	£23.99
Bridge Master Classic 2	£24.99
Business Tycoon	£25.99
C64 Classic 3000 games	£12.99
Caesar 3	£19.99
Caesars Palace 2000	£22.99
Carmageddon	£12.99
Carmageddon 2	£6.99
Castrol Honda Superbikes 2000	£25.99
Championship Manager '97/'98	£9.99
Championship Manager 99/00	£17.99
Chessmaster 7000	£22.99
Civilisation Call to Power	£19.99
Civilisation 2: Test of Time	£17.99
Civilisation 2 + Settlers 2 + Sim City 2000	£22.99
Clr 2 Collection: Civilisation 2, Fantastic Worlds, Conflicts In Civilisation	£17.99
Close Combat Trilogy	£26.99
Close Combat 2: A Bridge Too Far	£13.99
Close Combat 3: Russian Front	£13.99
Close Combat 4	£22.99
Codename Eagle	£24.99
Colin McRae Rally	£11.99
Combat Flight Sim (Microsoft)	£20.99
Command & Conquer & Covert Ops	£19.99
Command & Conquer 2 Red Alert	£29.99
C & C Red Alert, Aftermath + Counterstrike	£27.99
C & C Tiberian Sun	£29.99
C & C Tiberian Sun Firestorm Data Disk	£14.99
Commandos: Behind Enemy Lines	£10.99
Commandos: Beyond the Call of Duty	£16.99
Conflict Freespace 2	£17.99
Conflict Freespace Gold	£16.99
Conquer the Skies	£9.99
Creatures 2	£14.99
Creatures 2 Life Kit	£12.99
Creatures Adventures	£23.99
Cricket 2000	£28.99
Crimson Skies (Free limited edition strategy guide included)	£28.99
Croc 2	£18.99
Cutthroats	£27.99
Dark Vengeance	£17.99
Delta Force	£14.99
Delta Force 2	£27.99
Demolition Racer	£20.99
Deus Ex	£26.99
Devil Inside	£24.99
Diablo	£9.99
Diablo 2	£27.99
Dieskworld Noir	£19.99
Dukes of Hazzard: Racing for Home	£18.99
Dune 2000	£9.99
Dungeon Keeper & Magic Carpet Gold	£13.99
Dungeon Keeper 2	£17.99
Earth 2150	£22.99
EA Sports Rugby 2001	£26.99
Euro 2000	£28.99
European Air War	£16.99
Everquest & Ruins of Kunark (Online only)	£20.99
Expert Pool	£19.99
Extreme Biker	£25.99
F1 2000	£19.99
F1 Grand Prix 2	£9.99
F16 Viper & Mig-29 Fulcrum	£19.99
F1 World Grand Prix 99	£27.99
F22 Lightning 3	£16.99
FA-18E Super Hornet	£24.99
FA Premier League Football Manager 2000	£9.99
Falcon 4.0	£24.99
FIFA Soccer 2000	£19.99
FIFA 2001	£28.99
Fighter Squadron	£28.99
Final Fantasy 7	£16.99
Final Fantasy 8	£27.99
Fleet Command	£29.99
Flight Unlimited 2	£10.99
Flight Unlimited 3	£29.99
Flying Heroes	£23.99
Formula One Racing	£28.99
Giants	£28.99
Gift	£24.99
Grand Prix 3	£27.99
Grand Prix World	£20.99
Grand Theft Auto 2	£14.99
Half-Life Data Disk: Opposing Force	£17.99
Hellboy	£19.99
Heretic 2	£13.99
Heroes of Might & Magic 3 Compilation	£21.99
Hidden & Dangerous & Special Ops 2 Double Pack	£20.99
Hidden & Dangerous Data Disk	£11.99
Hogs of War	£22.99
Homeworld	£19.99
Icewind Dale	£26.99
Imperium Galactica 2 - Alliances	£23.99
Invictus	£27.99
International Cricket Captain 2	£26.99
Interstate '82	£28.99
Invictus	£27.99
Iron Plague	£9.99
I War Defiance	£13.99
Jagged Alliance 2	£14.99
Jedi Knight & Mysteries of Sith Data Disk	£12.99
Jimmy White's Snooker 2: Cueball	£14.99
Lands of Lore 3	£16.99
Legacy of Kain 2: Soul Reaver	£27.99
Lego Loco	£22.99
Lego Racers	£26.99
Le Mans 24Hour	£22.99
Lemmings Revolution	£19.99
Links LS 2000	£27.99
M25 Racer	£14.99
Majesty	£24.99
Megapak 9 - Civilisation 2, Interstate 76, Destruction Derby 2, Discworld 2, F22 Raptor, Jack Nicklaus 5, Pro Pinball Timeshock, Admiral Sea Battles	£12.99
Magic & Mayhem	£28.99
Mary King's Riding Star	£17.99
Mech Warrior 3	£17.99
Metal Gear Solid	£27.99
Metal Fatigue	£19.99
Micro Machines 3	£12.99
Microsoft Baseball 2001	£16.99
Microsoft Midtown Madness	£27.99
Microsoft Pinball Arcade	£17.99
Microsoft Return of Arcade	£17.99
Microsoft Revenge of Arcade	£17.99
Microsoft Motocross Madness	£14.99
Midtown Madness 2	£27.99
Mig Alley	£25.99
Might & Magic 7	£28.99
Mobil RAC Rally	£22.99
Money Mad	£19.99
Monkey Island 3	£12.99
Monopoly	£14.99
Monopoly 2	£27.99
Monster Truck Madness 2	£33.99
Moto Racer 2	£10.99
Music 2000	£23.99
Myst & Riven Double Pack	£10.99
NASCAR 2000	£20.99
NASCAR 3	£25.99
Nations	£25.99
NBA Live '99	£18.99
NBA Live 2000	£29.99
Need For Speed3: Hot Pursuit	£10.99
Need for Speed 4: Road Challenge	£17.99
Need for Speed 5	£29.99
Nerf Arena Blast	£22.99
Next Tetris	£22.99
NFL Madden '99	£18.99
NFL Madden 2000	£29.99
NHL Hockey '99	£18.99
NHL Hockey 2000	£29.99
Nocturne	£25.99
Nomad Soul	£27.99
Nox	£27.99
Odium	£22.99
Operational Art of War	£26.99
Outcast	£27.99
Panzer Elite	£25.99
PGA Tour Pro	£17.99
Pharaoh	£19.99
Phoenix	£26.99
Planescape Torment	£27.99
Police Quest SWAT 3	£25.99
Pool Shark	£19.99
Populous: the Third Coming	£24.99
Populous Data Disk: Undiscovered World	£11.99
Premier League Stars	£17.99
Prince Naseem Boxing	£24.99
Puzzle Bobble 2	£13.99
Quake 2	£17.99
Quake 2 Data Disk: Ground Zero	£15.99
Quake 3: Arena	£26.99
Quest for Glory 5: Dragon Fire	£25.99
Rage of Mages 2	£26.99
Railroad Tycoon 2 & Data Disk	£25.99
Railroad Tycoon 2 Data Disk	£13.99
Rainbow 6	£15.99
Rainbow 6 & Eagle Watch Disk Double Pack	£22.99
Rainbow 6 Data Disk: Eagle Watch	£13.99
Rally Masters	£22.99
Rayman 2	£21.99
Renegade Racers	£25.99
Requiem	£24.99
Resident Evil 2	£25.99
Revenant	£28.99
Re-Volt	£28.99
Rising Sun	£19.99
Risk 2	£26.99
Rogue Spear	£24.99
Rollercoaster Tycoon	£14.99
Rollercoaster Added Attraction Pack	£12.99
Rollercoaster Tycoon Loopy Landscapes	£12.99
Rugrats Adventure Game	£20.99
Sacrifice	£28.99
Scrabble	£24.99
Sega Rally 2	£24.99
Septerra Core: Legacy of the Creator	£24.99
Settlers 3	£21.99
Seven Kingdoms 2	£25.99
Shadow Madness	£28.99
Shadows of the Empire	£9.99
Shadow Watch	£20.99
Shanghai Dynasty	£19.99
Shogun: Total War	£28.99
Silkolene Honda Motocross GP	£22.99
Sin City 3000	£29.99
Simon the Sorcerer 3D	£25.99
Sinistar - Unleashed	£20.99
Slave Zero	£23.99
Soldier of Fortune	£26.99
Soul Bringer	£20.99
South Park Rally	£27.99
Speccy CD '98 (3000 Spectrum & C64 games)	£12.99
Special Ops	£9.99
Spirit of Speed 1937	£17.99
Sports Car GT	£10.99
Squad Leader	£27.99
Starcraft Data Disk: Brood War	£17.99
Starlancer	£27.99
Starship Titanic	£22.99
Starsiege & Tribes Double Pack	£30.99
Star Trek Armada	£24.99
Star Trek: Birth of the Federation	£16.99
Star Trek Bundle: Includes Star Trek Generations, Klingon Honor Guard & birth of Federation	£14.99
Star Trek Elite Force	£27.99
Star Trek Encyclopedia	£14.99
Star Trek Generations	£9.99
Star Trek: Hidden Evil	£19.99
Star Trek Klingon Honor Guard	£12.99
Star Trek New Worlds	£27.99
Star Trek: Star Fleet Command	£17.99
Star Wars Behind the Magic	£16.99
Star Wars Episode 1: Phantom Menace	£28.99
Star Wars Episode 1: Racer	£28.99
Star Wars: Force Commander	£28.99
Star Wars: Rogue Squadron	£27.99
Star Wars: X Wing Alliance	£26.99
Star Wars: X Wing Collector's Series	£22.99
Superbike World Champs	£17.99
Sydney 2000	£27.99
System Shock 2	£29.99
Thief 2	£27.99
Thief Gold	£13.99
Theme Park World	£28.99
The Sims (living it up)	£29.99
The Sims (living it up) Expansion Pack	£18.99
Tiger Woods '99 Golf	£19.99
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2000	£29.99
TOCA Touring Cars 2	£18.99
Tomb Raider 2 "The Golden Mask"	£12.99
Tomb Raider 3	£12.99
Tomb Raider 4: Last Revelation	£27.99
Tony Hawks 2	£27.99
Total Annihilation Kingdoms	£19.99
Totally Unreal	£17.99
Toy Story 2 Action Game	£22.99
Traffic Giant	£20.99
Trickstyle	£26.99
Trivial Pursuit 2	£19.99
Tycoon Collection	£27.99
UEFA Champions League 2000	£27.99
UEFA Manager 2000	£28.99
Ultima 9 Ascension	£28.99
Ultima Online Second Age	£29.99
Ultimate Golf	£26.99
Ultimate Soccer Manager 2000	£23.99
Unreal	£9.99
Unreal Tournament	£19.99
Urban Chaos	£27.99
Vampire Masquerade	£26.99
Virtual Pool Hall	£25.99
V Rally 2	£22.99
Wall Street Trader 99	£28.99
Wall Street Tycoon	£22.99
Warcraft 2	£18.99
Wargamer: Napoleon 1813	£24.99
Warhammer: Rites of War	£19.99
World Cup Cricket	£18.99
World War 2 Fighters	£24.99
Worms Armageddon Collection	£13.99
Worms 2	£16.99
X: Beyond the Frontier	£19.99
X Files: The Game	£17.99
X Wing v Tie Fighter & Balance of Power	£12.99
X Wing Alliance	£28.99
Zork Trilogy: Zork Grand Inquisitor, Return to Zork and Zork Nemesis	£24.99

WE DO NOT CHARGE YOUR CREDIT CARD UNTIL YOUR ORDER IS DESPATCHED, SO YOU CAN RESERVE YOUR NEW RELEASES TODAY!

CALL NOW FOR YOUR FREE CATALOGUE

SALES HOTLINE LOCAL RATE 0845 20 10 444

OPEN MON-FRI 9AM-10PM, SAT & SUN 10AM-10PM

SALES LOCAL RATE HOTLINE
0845 20 10 444

gameplay™
THE GATEWAY TO GAMES

BUDGET GAMES

A10 Cuba	£9.99
Age of Sail	£4.99
Armoured Fist 2.0 (Win '95)	£3.99
Atari Hits 2	£6.99
Betrayal In Antara	£9.99
Boggle	£7.99
Cannon Fodder 2 + Dune 2	£13.99
Caesar 2	£9.99
Caesar's Palace	£9.99
Chessmaster 5000	£9.99
Chronicles of the Sword	£8.99
Civil War General 1 or 2	£9.99
Conquest of the Empire	£7.99
Cyberstorm 2	£9.99
Dark Eye	£8.99
Dark Reign	£9.99
Dawn Patrol	£9.99
Destruction Derby 2	£13.99
Doom 2	£9.99
Duke Nukem 3D & 2 Data Disks	£6.99
Dungeon Keeper Gold	£9.99
EF2000	£6.99
F22 Lightning 2	£13.99
Fade to Black	£9.99
Fatal Racing	£9.99
Flying Corps	£4.99
Gabriel Knight 1 & 2	each £13.99
Gabriel Knight 3	£25.99
Grand Prix 2	£10.99
Grand Prix Manager 2	£10.99
Hardcore 4X4	£8.99
Harvest of Souls	£9.99
Heavy Gear	£9.99
Imperium Galactica	£5.99
International Cricket Captain	£9.99
Interstate 76	£9.99
Jonah Lomu Rugby	£11.99
Kings Quest 7	£9.99
Kings Quest 8: Mask of Eternity	£9.99
Lands of Lore 2	£8.99
M1 Tank Platoon 2	£9.99
Magic the Gathering (Microprose)	£10.99
Masters Of Orion 2	£9.99
Masters Of Orion 2 & Civnet	£12.99
Mech Warrior 2 or MW2 Mercenaries	each £9.99
Myth 2	£8.99
NASCAR 2	£10.99
Nitro Racers	£5.99
Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee	£10.99
Outlaws	£9.99
Outpost 2	£9.99
Panzer General	£9.99
Pete Sampras Tennis	£11.99
PGA European Tour	£11.99
Phantasmagoria 2	£13.99
Pilgrim	£9.99
POD Gold (Includes extra tracks)	£13.99
Police Quest SWAT 2	£9.99
Quake	£8.99
Red Baron 2	£8.99
Return to Zork	£7.99
Road Rash	£12.99
Sentinel Returns	£12.99
Super Puzzle Fighter 2	£9.99
Theme Hospital	£9.99
Theme Park	£9.99
Time Commando	£6.99
TOCA Touring Cars	£12.99
Tomb Raider & Unfinished Business	£12.99
Top Gun	£9.99
Transport Tycoon & World Editor	£9.99
Ultima 8	£15.99
Ultimate Race	£9.99
Ultimate Soccer Manager 2	£9.99
Virus	£5.99
X Com: Apocalypse	£9.99
X Com: Interceptor	£9.99
X Com: Terror From the Deep	£10.99
X Wing Collection + Rebel Assault	£19.99

Microsoft Flight Sim 2000	£35.99
Microsoft Flight Sim 2000 Pro	£52.99
Fly! Lauda Data Disk	£23.99
Scenery Desk 98 - Great Britain Parts 1, 2, & 3	£19.99
Scenery Desk 98 - Europe 1, 2 or 3	£29.99
Flight Sim FSFX V2 - Contains extra planes, scenery, sounds etc for FS5.1, FS6 & FS98	£34.99
Boeing/Business Jets/Airbus/Great Airlines	each £21.99

CHILDREN & EDUCATION

This is just a small selection of our educational range. Please call for a quote if you do not see what you are looking for.

DORLING KINDERSLEY

Atlas of the Solar System	£24.99
Bananas in Pyjamas	£15.99
Castle Explorer/Dinosaur Hunter Bundle	£24.99
Encyclopedia of Nature 2	£22.99
Encyclopedia of Science 1/Nature 1	each £10.99
Encyclopedia of Science 2	£12.99
Encyclopedia of Space & Universe	£15.99
History of the World 2	£23.99
My First Amazing World Explorer 2	£12.99
My First Incredible Amazing Dictionary 2	£17.99
Redshift 3	£22.99
Science Explorer Activity Pack	£17.99
Ultimate Human Body 2	£19.99
Virtual Reality Dinosaur Hunter	£17.99

DISNEY

We stock the full range of Disney CD Rom titles at some of the cheapest prices in Britain! Please call for further details.

BODERBUND

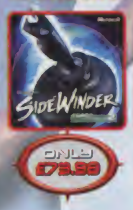
Green Eggs & Ham/Harry & the Haunted House	each £17.99
Zoombinis Maths Journey & Beanie Baby	£16.99
Maths Workshop	£23.99

MICROSOFT

Magic Schoolbus Range	each £16.99

NEW SIDEWINDER SERIES

MICROSOFT SIDEWINDER FORCE FEEDBACK 2



MICROSOFT SIDEWINDER STRATEGIC COMMANDER

MICROSOFT SIDEWINDER GAME VOICE

ONLY £45.99

MICROSOFT SIDEWINDER FORCE FEEDBACK WHEEL

Powerful force feedback facility! Rubber grip steering wheel with 8 buttons. Quick lock desk clamp! Includes Monster Truck Madness & Cart Precision Racing. Complete with pedals.

SPECIAL OFFER £79.99

SIDEWINDER WHEEL £42.99 (NO FEEDBACK)

SPEAKERS

SCREAMER SOUND STATION

300W PMPO, 3-way Sub-woofer system for PSX, Dreamcast, PC, Mac, MP3 & Walkman. Volume & bass control, power supply. Blue blue or purple. £39.99

HOME & REFERENCE

MICROSOFT SOFTWARE

Encarta World Atlas 2000	£25.99
Encarta 2000 Standard	£17.99
Encarta 2000 Deluxe	£59.99
Greetings 2000	£17.99
Money 2000	£26.99
Money 2000 Financial Suite	£44.99
Office 2000 Professional Upgrade	£299.99
Plus (For Windows'98)	£36.99
Windows '98 Upgrade	£77.99
Windows '98 *Full Version	£159.99

Click Art 125,000	£22.99
Corel Draw 4	£14.99
Corel Draw 6	£30.99
Dance EJ 2	£22.99
Rave EJ	£21.99
Encyclopedia Britannica 2000 Standard	£24.99
Britannica 2000 Deluxe	£39.99
Britannica 2000 DVD	£54.99
Family Tree Maker V5 Deluxe	£33.99
Flagtower Range	each £5.99
Hutchinsons Encyclopedia '97	£8.99
Mavis Teaches Typing V8	£29.99
Ordnance Survey Map of GB	£9.99
Oxford Interactive Encyclopedia	£19.99
Simply Speaking Gold	£24.99
Top of the Pops 2.0	£20.99

Buying Presents?

Can't find what they want? Don't know what they want?

No Problem!

We now have gift vouchers available in a range of denominations (£5, £10, £20) so you no longer have to guess which version of Big Alien Nutter they want for Christmas! Your vouchers come with one of a choice of cards shown below.

PC GAMES CHEAT LINE

09066 098050

Nearly 300 games available!

Calls cost 60p per minute, maximum call cost £3. Please ask permission before calling!

JOYSTICKS & PADS

Gravis Analogue Pro Joystick	£36.99
Gravis Gamepad	£21.99
Gravis Gamepad Pro	£25.99
Gravis Xterminator Pro	£77.99
Logitech Formula Force Steering Wheel	£94.99
Microsoft Dual Strike	£27.99
Microsoft Sidewinder Precision Pro	£33.99
Microsoft Sidewinder Freestyle Pro	£29.99
Microsoft Sidewinder Force Feedback	£84.99
Microsoft Sidewinder Gamepad	£24.99

ALFA TWIN AUTO-SWITCH & 2 PLAYER ADAPTOR

A Splitter cable with a difference! Compatible with Win '95 and DOS and all joysticks/pads, the Alfa Quad allows 2 devices to be connected to one joystick port. 7ft long lead.

LOGITECH WINGMAN EXTREME

Featuring 7 programmable buttons, a smooth throttle slider, an 8 way hat switch and a twisting stick for rudder control, the Extreme 3D is an easy to use and very precise flight controller. USB connector allows for quick and easy installation. £24.99

WINGMAN FORCE FEEDBACK JOYSTICK

8-way hat switch, 9 buttons, high torque motors. The world's only immediate feedback precision joystick. £64.99

SAITEK PRODUCTS

X36 FLIGHTSTICK & THROTTLE PACK

Unarguably the best bundle available! Excellent reviews from all magazines, every feature conceivable - call for more info £64.99

SAITEK ACEMASTER 18

4 Microswitched fire buttons with turbo-fire, Hat switch, separate throttle lever, protein rubber grip £20.99

R4 RACING WHEEL & PEDALS

Easy clamping system, 10" padded wheel, Ratio Digital technology, Gear stick and shift paddles. £59.99

With Force Feedback £99.99

CYBORG 3D STICK

Programmable actions, left or right handed, hat switch, 3D twist function and 3 handle adjustments to allow you to make it fit your hand perfectly! £34.99

Saitek Cyborg 3D Joypad £29.99

VRF1 Xcelerator Analogue Wheel and Pedals Plus Network Q Rally & Int'l Rally Championship £29.99

RAZOR BOOMSLANG MOUSE 2000

Smooth, precise comfortable - not a Gillette product, but the new Boomslang mouse from Razor. High quality components combine with brilliant design to create the ultimate gaming mouse.

ONLY £53.99

HINT BOOKS

Age of Empires 2 Inside	£14.99
Asherons Call Official Secrets	£14.99
Drakan Official Guide	£15.99
Dungeon Keeper 2 Guide	£15.99
Half-Life Strategy Guide	£15.99
Indiana Jones Strategy Guide	£15.99
Homeworld Official Guide	£15.99
Kingpin Official Guide	£17.95
Might & Magic 7 Strategy	£15.99
MS Flight Sim 2000 Moves	£14.99
Pharaoh Strategy Guide	£12.99
Quake 3 Secrets & Strats	£12.99
Riven Unauthorised Secrets	£6.99
Settlers 3 Strategy Guide	£15.99
Seven Kingdoms 2 Guide	£15.99
Sim City 3000 Strats & Sols	£15.99
Star Trek New Worlds Gde	£14.99
SWAT 3 Official Strat Guide	£12.99
TA Kingdoms Prima Guide	£15.99
Tiberian Sun Unauth'd Gde	£14.99
Theme Park World Off Gde	£12.99
Tomb Raider 2 or 3 Official	£10.99
Unreal Tournament Guide	£12.99
Windows '98 for Dummies	£18.99

Many more books available on our website at www.gameplay.com

POSTAGE & PACKAGING

We offer FREE 2nd class postage and packaging on all orders over £19.99. On all orders of £19.99 or less a charge of £1.40 will be added to your order to cover P&P. Your order should arrive within 5 working days of despatch, if you place your order online we'll send you and Email to let you know when we've sent your order. You have the option to purchase 1st class postage at a charge of £2.16 that should mean that your order is received within 2 working days of despatch, we also provide a guaranteed next day courier service via Parcelforce at a charge of £4.99.

PLEASE CALL TO CONFIRM PRICES AND AVAILABILITY BEFORE ORDERING AS SOME ITEMS MAY BE LIMITED STOCK AND PRICES ARE SUBJECT TO FLUCTUATION

gameplay™ THE GATEWAY TO GAMES

Cut out this order form and post to: gameplay, PO Box 264, Tingley, Wakefield, WF3 1YB

NAME: ..... HAVE YOU ORDERED BEFORE? YES / NO

ADDRESS: .....

.....

POSTCODE: ..... SIGNATURE: .....

TEL: ..... EMAIL: .....

☐ Please tick here if you do not wish to receive promotional materials from us or third parties which you may find interesting.

CASH ☐ CHEQUE ☐ POSTAL ORDER ☐ CARD ☐

CARD NO. ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ EXPIRY DATE ☐☐/☐☐ ISSUE NO. ☐☐ SWITCH ONLY

Thank you for your order

P&P EXPLAINED

We offer FREE 2nd class postage and packaging on all orders over £19.99. On orders of £19.99 or less a charge of £1.40 must be added to your order to cover P&P. You can upgrade to 1st class postage by adding £2.16 P&P (delivery in 2 working days). For next-day courier service via Parcelforce please add £4.99 P&P.

ITEM DESCRIPTION	PRICE
	£
	£
	£
	£
	£
OPTIONAL EXPRESS CHEQUE CLEARANCE:* ADD £1.00 HERE	£
Gift Vouchers (multiples of £5)	£
TICK YOUR CHOSEN CARD DESIGN HERE A B C D E F	
P&P	£
TOTAL	£

PLEASE MAKE CHEQUES PAYABLE TO 'GAMEPLAY'

Prices correct at time of going to press. E & OE. PCY(1)

Cheques payable to 'Gameplay'.

*Please note - express cheque clearance cannot be used for bank drafts or building society cheques.

Sent to press 24/11/2000

PLEASE QUOTE THIS REFERENCE WHEN ORDERING PCY(1)

gameplay™

THE GATEWAY TO GAMES

BUNDLE OFFERS!

SIDEWINDER STRATEGIC COMMANDER

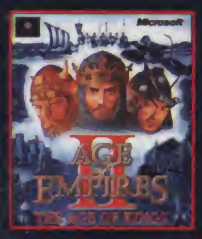
£28.99*

£22.99

£54.99

ONLY £99.99 Save £6.98
Plus £10 Cashback*

*Age of Empires II The Age of Kings Includes a special £10 cashback offer!


£28.99*

£22.99

ONLY £49.99
Plus £10 Cashback*

BEST OF UNREAL TOURNAMENT

£8.99

SIDEWINDER GAME VOICE

£46.99

ONLY £52.99
Save £2.99

All Trademarks and Copyrights Acknowledged.

● Free delivery on orders over £19.99 ● Full 10 day no quibble returns policy

SALES HOTLINE
0845 20 10 444

STORES STORES
Retail

WEB SITE
www.gameplay.com

TV TV
Interactive

WAP PHONE
http://mobile.gameplay.com

PLEASE QUOTE THIS REFERENCE WHEN ORDERING PCY(1)

www.pczone.co.uk

PC ZONE

HALF-PRICE SUBSCRIPTION

+ 2 free CD-ROMs

By subscribing to PC Zone today you can SAVE AN AMAZING 50% on the cover price!

Make the most of our BEST EVER SAVING and pay just £5.25 every 3 issues (normal price £10.50). You'll also receive 2 fantastic FREE CD-ROMs, featuring one FULL game plus the excellent Extended Play Collection V enhancing some of today's top titles.

YOUR 1/2 PRICE SUBSCRIPTION OFFER

- Subscribe for just £5.25 every 3 issues
- Save 50% on shop price
- 2 FREE CD-ROMS
- FREE home delivery
- Full Money-Back Guarantee

Gaming Zone 2000 – FREE

Full Game – Steel Panthers: World at War. Obliterate the enemy with this WWII based strategy game. Go on, get out there and do it for your country!

Extended Play V – FREE

Refresh your favourite games with the excellent Extended Play Collection, jam-packed with a wealth of maps, patches, extra levels, add-ons and edits for today's top titles.

All gifts subject to availability. Allow 28 days for delivery. Please note that Windows 95 is required for most programs on the FREE CD-ROMs and that those on Extended Play V have limited functionality.

HURRY! YOU MUST REPLY WITHIN 7 DAYS TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS FANTASTIC OFFER.

☐ **YES!** Please start my half price subscription to PC ZONE and send me my 2 FREE CD-ROMs
☐ I am an existing subscriber please extend my subscription and send me my 2 FREE CD-ROMs

YOUR DETAILS

MR/MRS/MS FORENAME SURNAME

ADDRESS

POSTCODE

DAYTIME PHONE

YOUR 13 ISSUE SUBSCRIPTION

Complete section ❶ Cheque, ❷ Credit/Debit Card OR ❸ Direct Debit

CHEQUE OR CREDIT/DEBIT CARD PAYMENT

1 year (13 issues) ☐ UK £22.97 ☐ Europe £38.97 ☐ World £54.97

❶ ☐ I enclose a cheque made payable to Dennis Publishing Ltd

❷ Please charge my ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ Amex ☐ Switch (Issue No. ____)

CARD NO. EXPIRY DATE

SIGNED DATE

☐ I would like to pay JUST £5.25 every 3 issues by Direct Debit (UK Only) **SAVE 50%**

Instruction to your Bank or Building Society to pay by Direct Debit — DIRECT Debit

Please fill in the form and send to: Dennis Publishing Ltd, FREEPOST WD7, Bristol BS32 0ZZ

Name and full postal address of your Bank or Building Society

To the manager.
Bank name

Address

Postcode

Account in the name of

Branch sort code

Bank/Building Society account number

Originator's Identification Number: 7 2 4 6 8 0

Ref.no. to be completed by Dennis Publishing

Instruction to your Bank or Building Soc.
Please pay Dennis Publishing Ltd. Direct Debits from the account detailed in this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Dennis Publishing Ltd and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my Bank/Building Society.

Signature(s)

Date

Banks and building societies may not accept Direct Debit instructions for some types of account

FULL MONEY BACK GUARANTEE

Your subscription to PC Zone is protected by our Full Money-Back Guarantee, so if you're not completely satisfied you can write to cancel your subscription and receive a refund of the cost of all un-mailed issues – no questions asked!

☐ please indicate here if you do not wish to receive further special offers from companies other than Dennis Publishing Ltd, OR if you are under 18 years of age.

NOW RETURN YOUR COMPLETED FORM TO:

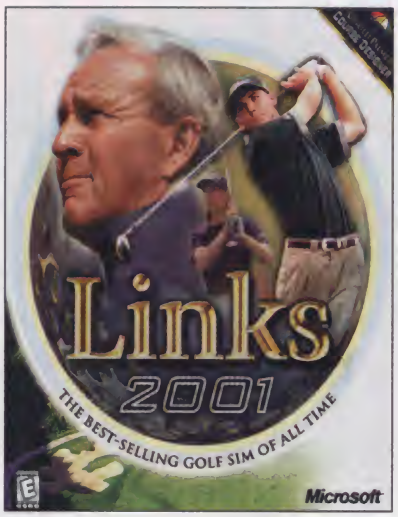
PC Zone subscriptions Department, FREEPOST WD7, Bristol, BS32 0ZZ

(No stamp required)

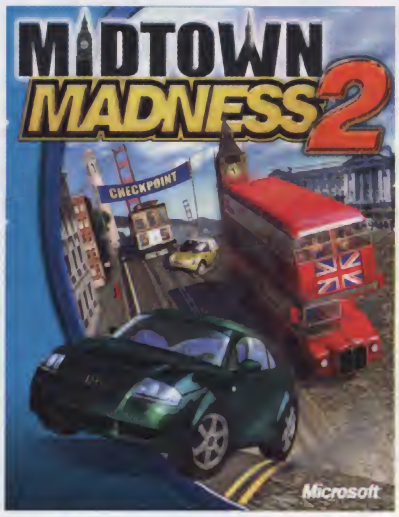
Instant Order Hotline 01454 642497

DJ 01

THE BEST STRATEGY IS TO GET PRACTISING BEFORE YOUR MATES BUY THEM TOO



LINKS 2001



MIDTOWN MADNESS 2

AMERICAN McGEE'S ALICE™

NO ONE LIVES FOREVER™

WHATEVER TURNS YOU ON

Virgin megastores

EA GAMES.the EA GAMES logo and American McGee's Alice are trademarks or registered trademarks of Electronic Arts Inc. in the US and/or other countries. Fox, Fox Interactive, The Operative, No One Lives Forever and their associated logos are trademarks of Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation. © 2000 Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation.

THE LIONHEAD DIARIES

They do say that chaos theory dictates that if a butterfly flaps its wings in China, a game developer in England spends weeks twiddling with his code, as head scripter James Leach reveals in this month's Lionhead Diaries

AS OBSERVED BY Steve Jackson

SYNCHRONISED TRIMMING

As *Black & White* moves rapidly towards completion, the team's enduring enthusiasm for adding and changing features is having to be ruthlessly curtailed. "We'll save that one for *Black & White II...*" has become our catchphrase. Head scripter James Leach, who now virtually lives in the office, is constantly re-writing the scripts to accommodate last-minute alterations made by the rest of the team. In this month's diary, James gives us a feel for the day-to-day pressures of bringing *Black & White* to its conclusion.

Although the bug lists are shrinking, the atmosphere is still a heady mixture of excitement and edginess. Programmers and artists are regularly playing the game for fun. This may sound odd, but it wasn't long ago that the prime reason for these people to get stuck into the game was to check whether something worked, or looked right. But now you'll see somebody actually taking on the challenges and quests in the game and trying different ways to beat them. It's still not finished, though.

"Hey, is it me or is the landscape a bit dark when you're extremely evil?" called out George Backer, our Austrian online wizard. The office instantly became eager to check this out. It was a close call and it was down to the head of art, Paul McLaughlin, to cast his deciding vote. "It's nearly there, but if someone's monitor is set a little dark it won't look perfect. I'll bring up the lightness one shade." A few clicks and a little typing later, and it was done.

But the debate wasn't over. Jeremy Chatelaine had an idea. "At night, if you're evil, why don't you see in infrared? It'd look great." This one was shouted down. A lot of changes for not much benefit. The land would look odd, and any advantage, such as being able to see things on the landscape, would be outweighed by the strange visual effect. "Besides, there's enough ambient light, and the villages all have their own lighting. And anyway you're a god, so you cast light wherever you move." And that was the end of that.

Russell Shaw is still submerged in sound effects. Recently, a ghostly chorus of female voices wafted from his studio, prickling the necks of all who heard them. The sound of kids trapped in a rock fissure proved so harrowing that people had to go outside to calm down! In the rush of the graphics being completed, it's sometimes easy to overlook the sound effects. But they are totally amazing. And, of course, they blend and change seamlessly as your alignment changes.

The only thing that doesn't sound quite right at the moment are the character voices. In order to get the challenges tested fully, we needed to record placeholder voices for the villagers and Advisors. Russell and I spent a crazy Sunday acting for all we were worth in front of the microphone to get them recorded. The result? Well, neither of us will be giving up our day jobs. The final recording is imminent, and the professionals not only sound better, but bring a whole new dimension to the characters in the game.

Wish you were here.

Trade your single-player objects online.

"The game is so deep and complicated, it runs like chaos theory – a tiny change on one machine has a knock-on effect and changes something else"

Out-of-sync errors are no more.

Infrared vision? Maybe in the sequel.

But all this is nothing compared to the biggest nightmare we've had recently – getting the multiplayer working. Daniel Deptford, online coder, tells the gruesome tale.

"The bane of our lives is the out-of-syncs. These errors are caused when two or more connected machines show even the tiniest difference in the game world.

"*Black & White*'s Eden is so packed with objects and people that it's impossible to continually update all their positions to each multiplayer machine. Only things which get moved by the player or are part of the player or his Creature are aligned perfectly via the connection.

"But the game is so deep and complicated, it runs like chaos theory – a tiny change on one machine has a knock-on effect and changes something else, which alters something else, and suddenly things are totally different on all the connected computers.

"For example, a minuscule difference in a villager's size between two connected PCs means that if he's thrown, he might travel a metre further on one. He might then get up and run north to safety on one and south on another. Then, if he went north he could meet a woman and marry her. The southbound man becomes a farmer and stays single. Chaos theory dictates that within a few minutes both worlds could be utterly different and the multiplayer game would crash.

"We had to use weapons-grade debugging software, capable of freezing the game during an out-of-sync, then going backwards in game time to isolate the moment the worlds diverged. And it works. Out-of-sync errors are now stopped before they even start.

"There's also another benefit – we can spot anyone trying to alter their code or tweak their Creature's code. This has been a problem in other games, but thanks to our error-spotting software we can detect a cheat in under one tenth of a second.

"But it hasn't all been fixing bugs. Once the out-of-sync hell was over we implemented the object-trading system. If you're in the single-player game you can now store any objects you find in your mini-vortex. When you go online you can either trade these outside the game, or look in your mini-vortex during the game and retrieve anything there to use right away.

"It's fun doing cool features. But solving that out-of-sync problem was infinitely more satisfying!" PZ

As well as being a director of developer Lionhead, Steve Jackson is co-founder of Games Workshop, author of Fighting Fantasy Gamebooks, *and a columnist for* The Daily Telegraph.

THE WORLD ACCORDING TO...

DREW MARKHAM

Gray Matter may be new, but the people involved are no strangers to controversy. *Paul Presley* meets the kingpin of coders

"Hi, I'm Drew Markham. You may remember me from such games as *Redneck Rampage* and *Kingpin*." OK, so the Troy McClure impression doesn't really work on paper, but Drew Markham, Gray Matter's creative director, is a man of many hidden talents. Not least of which are vocal.

As well as being the voice behind all the gangsters in 1999's über-violent 'street' FPS, *Kingpin*, were it not for last-minute contract negotiations between 20th Century Fox and the least visible actors on television, he may well have ended up being the voices of everyone's favourite cartoon family *The Simpsons*, such was the strength of his audition tape during an actors' strike several years ago.

TV's loss is gaming's gain. As Xatrix Entertainment, Markham and co brought no end of originality to the industry, in almost equal measure to all the controversy that accompanied it. Recently, Xatrix underwent several changes and now, as Gray Matter, the same team is behind the stunning-looking *Return To Castle Wolfenstein*.

So what happened to Xatrix?
Some of the original partners involved in Xatrix wanted to get out of the business, and the most efficient thing for those of us who wanted to keep doing what we were doing was to break off and form a new company. It was mostly for economic reasons – just to clean everything up and make sure we weren't carrying around any old baggage.

Little more than a name change then?
We're more focused now. In the old days we were on a bit of a treadmill. One of the things that got me fairly disillusioned about the business was just having to pump products out. We did something like seven games in five years, which is just an insane amount for one team to do.

That would be how many people?
About 18 to 20. It's really tough to make an FPS in just one year. *Kingpin* took us about 13 months and we really needed another six to eight months of development time on it. I look back at what we wanted to do with it and realise that we were barely able to scratch the surface with a lot of the elements but were forced to release it to get it out on time.

What sort of things did you want to develop further in *Kingpin*?
The element I wanted to explore the most, and it's something I'll definitely return to someday, is the concept of the characters being ambiguous towards the player – not just either hostile or friendly. When you have a world where everybody is after you it's a lot easier. Whereas a world where somebody *might* be after you or *might* be trying to pick your pocket or *might* be your friend, all based around what you did with somebody else, becomes a giant can of worms. We just got the tiniest bit of it working in *Kingpin*, but it was only when we finished the demo about two or three months before we were due to ship the finished game that we finally knew what it was that we needed to do. There was just no time to do it. It really irritated me.

Watching you demo *Wolfenstein* earlier I couldn't help noticing the look of joy on your face as body parts were flying here and there. How 'sick' do you think you are?
I don't think I'm any sicker than the next guy. I have a pretty strong hunch that the more sick and twisted we are in a virtual way, the more normal we are in a regular way. Let's face it, we didn't conquer this planet by being nice guys. We're pretty much a brutal race that just decimated all of our competition and subjugated every single thing on this planet that we possibly could.

> **"The more sick we are virtually, the more normal we are in a regular way"**
> DREW MARKHAM, GRAY MATTER

Yay us.
Yay us. We kicked everybody else's ass, but in the

process we got ourselves an interesting little catch-22. We've reached the point where we've got dominion over everything, but now we've got to quash these violent tendencies that got us here, that have been ingrained in us for God knows how long. That stuff doesn't just drop off overnight.

Cue video games.
Games are natural outlets for the aggression that builds up in humans and I think they're necessary. It always cracks me up when you have aberrant behaviour that gets loosely tied to something – such as real-life violence being linked to playing games. There's a mentality coming from some people that goes: "There shouldn't be any more violent video games, there shouldn't be any violent movies, there shouldn't be violent anything". If we applied that same mentality to anything that could go wrong, we wouldn't have aeroplanes or cars. There's a risk in everything. If the aberration is like 0.000001 per cent, you can't really claim it's the key problem. Where do you stop? A plane crashed? Right, there will be no more air travel.

We'll end up living in plastic bubbles.
That's right. Let's face it, the Earth might get smacked by a meteor tomorrow, or a kid might invent a virus in his basement that eats all the oxygen out of the atmosphere in the next 20 years. Who knows what's going to happen? We might as well have some fun while we can.

In a way, that's always been the industry's defence against these claims. But aren't there times when we've used that argument to justify going too far? Deliberately playing on that shock value?
There have been so many unbelievably violent video games made which were nothing to look at

graphically. To the outside eye, they were just a mass of pixels. But the kids playing it knew exactly what they were supposed to be doing, even if their parents didn't. As soon as it gets too realistic, that's when people start wigging out.

All too often it's the 'think of the children' argument that stops gaming from being taken seriously.
For me, *Kingpin* was mostly about asking why we were avoiding the whole language issue. We know that most PC games sell to adults, the age of the market is really 18 to 35. Let's face it, it's an expensive hobby. It's not like a five-year-old kid can just go out and buy himself a £1,500 PC. The game was rated mature, we knew it was for adults, we made it so that you could turn all the language and the gore off if you wanted. But the argument is, why are you [the censors] going to deny me, as a healthy adult, the choice if that's what I want to look at or listen to? How is it any different to watching *Pulp Fiction*? That's the point I wanted to make.

Was it the right decision for the game's own sake though?
We were run up the flagpole because of it, but I'm glad we did it. We didn't break any walls down perhaps, but it definitely loosened some of the bricks. Sometimes you just have to do that.

Moving on, let's talk about zombies for a minute. Why the hell are games, *Wolfenstein* included, filled to bursting point with zombies these days?
It's kind of like asking, why is disco music suddenly popular again? It's hard to explain. The reason they're in *Wolfenstein* is because they were in the original and we're staying true to that. I don't know why, but there's been a big monster culture resurgence in the last few years. Look at all the vampires about at the moment. I don't get the whole zombie thing though. Zombies never scared me as a kid. I always went for the psychological terror more than anything else.

That's when those games really work. When there is nothing there but they've got your mind working against you, filling in all the blanks.
The best horror movies, to me, are the ones where things happen off the screen.

Could you have done *Wolfenstein* without all the zombies and the occult stuff? Just sticking to a Nazi war story?
Yeah, you could have. You can do it anyway, as long as you pick an anchor point to base the story around.

Would it still have been *Wolfenstein* though?
No, probably not. The original, which was what, nine years ago now, had all the zombies and the occult stuff and Hitler in the mecha-suit and everything. There was so much crazy stuff in there that it always struck me as a kind of 1940s comic book version of the Nazis. So no, I think *Wolfenstein* really needs to stick with all of that. The trick this time round is having to explain it all. Back in the old days it was simple enough just to say, "Well, there are zombies here. We don't really have to explain it. There are just zombies here, and a guy with a gun in his chest." Now people want to know, "But why is that there? And why is *that* there? What's up with all this?" Everybody's extremely inquisitive now. The trick now is to weave all of those things together in a way that supports a greater story.

Is there any weight to the argument for FPS engine designers such as id to just concentrate on making a decent tool for teams such as yourselves and Raven to make games with?
I don't really think you can make a great engine without producing a game with it. If you think about what it takes to make great engine technology, it's all push-pull stuff. You get a little bit of something built and you need to test it within a game to see if it will work. The process of building a game alongside the development of an engine is really what makes the engine complete. If you take the game part of it away I think it's going to fall short.

"Why are the censors going to deny a healthy adult the choice? How is it different to watching *Pulp Fiction*?"
DREW MARKHAM, GRAY MATTER

You don't see a day when, for example, *Quake IV* would be a gaming equivalent of graphics package Photoshop?

"I'm not any sicker than the next guy," says Drew.

Someday, maybe. I'm sure that the day will come when things are that abstract. But at the end of the day it's the individuality of the team putting the thing together that makes it work. If we'd started *Wolfenstein* without an engine and had to build our own it would have been an incredibly long and laborious process. Carmack himself has said that in 18 months you can make a great engine or a great game but you can't make both.

What's the next evolutionary step for the first-person shooter?
It's bifurcated. Or trifurcated, or whatever the phrase is. I think we just hit the Cambrian explosion of gaming where we just split into a bunch of different parts. Really what we're talking about is not the FPS but the 'FP' part. What we're doing is taking the first-person aspect and grafting that onto other games. Take *Deus Ex*, for example. That's more of an RPG in first-person than a traditional FPS. We started with shooter games because that was the easiest thing to begin with. Everybody wants to kill you and you want to kill all of them. That's a pretty simple concept. But now I think we're going to see a number of new offshoot genres of FPS that will get crystallised. There's no one recipe for making an FPS anymore.

Does nationality come into it at all? Is there more originality in Europe, for instance?
I don't really know. Culture might have something to do with it. I mean, we're probably in the hardest city in the world to make a video game because we've got so many distractions around us. I've always said if I could move everybody to Scotland it would be great, because there are only about two weeks in every year that you can go outside. I can say that because I've lived there – I know from whence I speak. Here we've got the beach, we've got downtown LA, we've got Hollywood, we can go to the mall or, as the weather's really great, just drive around.

You're saying we make really good game designers because we're shut-ins?
Exactly, you're shut-ins [laughs]! Actually, it's sad to say that, but in some senses it's true. You really have to cloister yourself off to do this a lot of the time. But I'm sure that British and European culture influence your style of games and your attitudes towards them. There's often a great sense of scale and drama and all that, especially in games created by some of the French designers.

I get the feeling that the UK teams would often like access to some of the money and investment on offer in the States though. It often seems like much more of a business in America. Do you consider game designing to be a hobby?
It was. As a whole, we tend to straddle the line between hobby and profession and the reason is that, ultimately, what we do boils down to passion. If you're not passionate about this on a 24-hour-a-day basis then I think you're likely to fail. We live this stuff. We eat it, we breath it, we sleep it. Maybe we can be a little bereft of passion in America as we do tend to have it a little bit cushy here and it tends to make us a little flabby sometimes. The people that 'kill' in this business, in the good way, are the ones that attack. They love it, they want to see what's next, they want to be excited about what they can do. It's that sense of passion.

Not something lacking at Gray Matter, even if it does manifest itself rather more violently than elsewhere. In one sense it's a shame that the controversy has overshadowed the team's games, even if it does get people confronting issues that need to be explored. Behind the blood, gore and expletives have often been some interesting advances in gameplay.

We can only hope that with *Wolfenstein*, people see the game first and the mature content second.

Looks like they've developed some sort of invisible gun.

Another worker commuting into London.

Good arms to rip heads off with.

A river runs through it, then.

Drew demonstrates a few simple principles of violence.

The physics are going to be more realistic than ever.

Wolfenstein confronts some burning issues head on.

Redneck Rampage: cult game, a bit rubbish.

Forget violent games, this is the real problem with America.

Don't remember seeing him in *Redneck*.

TEAM TALK

The *ZONE* office manage to tear themselves away from *Equestriad 2001* in the unlikely pursuit of real-life sporting excellence

TALKING BOLLOCKS Martin Korda

Buoyed by an impressive league run in the Dennis Publishing five-a-side tournament (we managed to go two matches without losing), we concluded that our 8-2 drubbing in the first game was no more than bad luck. Dave and Tim's shots, which narrowly missed a sixth-floor window, were blamed on the moon's gravitational pull, while mine and Phil's pitiful displays at the back were put down to the ball being "too round".

Our next match saw us triumph with a mighty 8-2 victory of our own (rumours that we played an under-fives team are unsubstantiated), followed by a seesawing 4-4 draw in which we conceded two goals in the last three minutes (due, of course, to the lie of the pitch). Psyched up and claiming to disinterested colleagues that we were definitely going to win the league, the whole event was cancelled. We could have been contenders.

After being denied the real thing, we turned our energies to an imaginatively named online football management sim called Soccersim.com. Several of us took the reigns of second division Spanish teams, but with half the season gone, our aspirations of greatness haven't quiet gone according to plan. Dave, Richie and Colin have been fired, Tim has quit, citing a shortage of time (ie, he was rubbish), and Prezzer is fighting a gritty relegation battle. Those of you compelled to laugh at our expense can see how the rest of us are faring, or even join in yourselves by logging onto www.soccersim.com (beta 3d).

After several weeks of careful planning, we finally organised a *PC ZONE* poker night. Having spent weeks studying books such *as Poker For Idiots* and watching *Late Night Poker* on Channel 4, we decided we were ready.

It was to be the event of the year, but turned out to be somewhat of an anticlimax when only five people turned up. The evening was hosted by the world's worst gambler, Dave, whose impressive portfolio of failed bets includes such corkers as putting £10 on Nasty Nick Bateman to win *Big Brother*, precisely three minutes before it was announced that he'd been kicked out of the show. Needless to say, the rest of us felt pretty confident.

However, in a masterful display, Dave nearly proved us all wrong until he lost out right at the end to veteran card player Prez (who suspiciously had more flushes in one night than a toilet in a diarrhoeric household).

The night had begun somewhat gingerly. Fearful of an early and humiliating exit, we all refused to be drawn into big money stakes, until someone put on *a Sex Pistols* album. With everyone suddenly convinced that they were not only born-again anarchists but unbeatable at poker, huge amounts of money were lost, and as a result we've all refused to play again unless we get to listen to *The Best Of Patagonian Pan Pipes Volumes 1-8* for the entire evening.

> **"Suddenly we were not only born-again anarchists, but unbeatable at poker. As a result, vast sums of money were lost..."**

Counter-Strike is still, as ever, taking up an unhealthy amount of our time. For some, this was made even worse when a Dennis Publishing *Counter-Strike* discussion board was set up. Inevitably, within three postings the whole thing had degenerated into an all-out slagfest. Fortunately, though, it never quite sunk to the depths of teenage chat forums, in which awe-stricken 13-year-olds suddenly realise they can have a go at other people without the risk of serious physical injury, as they gleefully embellish each and every banal italicised insult with at least 14 pithy exclamation marks. After a week of pointless ego-laden bravado, everyone got bored and no one's given a toss about it since.

Oh yes, and while I'm on the subject (shameless plug coming up), the new *PC ZONE* chat forum is running again. So yes, there you go, err... go and post some messages. Go on, go now.

Just after the deadline for the last issue, a strange two-day craze called *Equestriad 2001* inexplicably gripped two members (who will remain anonymous) of the *PC ZONE* office. As the rest of us looked on in disbelief, the culprits giggled like 10-year-olds as they navigated their mounts round the game's patronising events.

The rest of us concluded that they'd been struck down by stuck-up 14-year-old girl syndrome, as they'd started to snort while laughing and phoning their parents to check if they were rich enough to call themselves upper class. It was a relief once they'd snapped out of it, although we did have to buy them a Porsche each before they stopped complaining.

Apart from that little lot though, it's generally been a pretty quiet month.

Never, ever, ever, play poker for money while listening to this man's music.

If you love this game, then there's obviously something wrong with you.

Like *Championship Manager*, *Soccersim* is not much to look at, but is fiendishly addictive.

Special Reserve Discount Network Specialreserve.net

PHONE 0870 725 9999 FAX 0870 725 9988

UKgames.com

SAVE £10
B17 2: MIGHTY EIGHT 24.99

SAVE £17
DELTA FORCE 2 17.99

SAVE £12
SUDDEN STRIKE 27.99

SAVE £7
WWTBA MILLIONAIRE 22.99

SAVE £13
MONKEY ISL 4 26.99

SAVE £3
C & C: RED ALERT 2 31.99

STAR BUY
CHAMP MAN 00/01 23.99

Over 4000 discounted games, DVD films, computer supplies, peripherals, PCs and consoles
PLUS cheats, demos, clips, discussions, reviews and prizes. Visit UKgames.com or UKpc.net NOW!

TOP 50 PC GAMES

AIRLINE TYCOON	19.99
ALICE	**29.99**
B17 FLYING FORTRESS 2: THE MIGHTY EIGHTH	**24.99**
BALDUR'S GATE 2: SHADOWS OF AMN	26.99
BALDUR'S GATE & TALES OF THE SWORD COAST DATA CD 95%	16.99
BEST OF RANGE:	
- DISCWORLD NOIR 90%	14.99
- DRIVER 83%	12.99
- UNREAL TOURNAMENT (H2H-NI) 98%	14.99
BOARD GAMES FAMILY COLLECTION Monopoly, Trivial Pursuit and Cluedo	19.99
CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 2000/2001	**23.99**
COLIN MCRAE RALLY 2.0 RR5/00	**26.99**
COMBAT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2: WWII PACIFIC THEATRE	28.99
COMMAND & CONQUER: TIBERIAN SUN	14.99
COMMAND & CONQUER: RED ALERT 2	**31.99**
CRIMSON SKIES	27.99
CURSE OF MONKEY ISLAND 94%	14.99
DELTA FORCE 2 86%	**17.99**
DEUS EX	28.99
DIABLO 2 RR6/00	24.99
F1 MANAGER 2000	19.99
FA PREMIER LEAGUE MANAGER 2001	19.99
FIFA 2001	29.99
FINAL FANTASY VIII	14.99
GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO	**28.99**
GRAND PRIX 3	26.99
GUNLOK	**27.99**
GUNMAN CHRONICLES	**29.99**
HALF - LIFE GENERATIONS 95% Half - Life, Opposing Force, Team Fortress Classic	**28.99**
HOMEWORLD 2: CATACLYSM	**24.99**
INTERNATIONAL CRICKET CAPTAIN 2000	18.99
JIMMY WHITE'S 2: CUEBALL 88%	**7.99**
KINGPIN 92%	16.99
MECHWARRIOR 3 90%	7.99
AGE OF EMPIRES 2 : THE AGE OF KINGS	32.99
AGE OF EMPIRES 2: THE CONQUERORS EXPANSION PACK	21.99
METAL GEAR SOLID	27.99
MIDTOWN MADNESS 2	28.99
RACING MADNESS	22.99
MONKEY ISLAND 4: ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND	26.99
PREMIER MANAGER 99 85%	4.99
ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 91%	16.99
ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON DATA CD: LOOPY LANDSCAPES	14.99
RUGBY CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER	19.99
SHEEP	26.99
SIERRA ORIGINALS: CAESAR 3 92%	12.99
SIM CITY 3000: UK EDITION	26.99
STAR TREK: VOYAGER: ELITE FORCE	25.99
STAR WARS: ROGUE SQUADRON	14.99
SUDDEN STRIKE	27.99
SUPERBIKES 2001	29.99
THE SIMS DATA CD: LIVIN' IT UP	19.99
THEME PARK WORLD	14.99
TOMB RAIDER 5: CHRONICLES AND LEVEL EDITING PACK	28.99
TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2	24.99
WHO WANTS TO BE A MILLIONAIRE	22.99

DEALS OF THE MONTH

LOGITECH WEBCAM EXPRESS (USB) ... 35.99
Send video images and photos over the Internet as easily as you now send text. Simply plug in the camera, install the easy-to-use software, and push a button to record a video or snap a photo

TOMB RAIDER TRILOGY ... 19.99
Three Lara's for the price of one? Surely every man's dream? Now you can own the first three PC Tomb Raider games for and amazing £19.99!

3Dfx VOODOO 3 3000 (PCI) ... 87.99
3Dfx VOODOO 4 4500 (PCI or AGP) ... 139.99
3Dfx VOODOO 5 5500 (AGP) ... 199.99
3Dfx VOODOO 5 5500 (PCI) ... 259.99
CREATIVE LABS GeFORCE 2 GTS (AGP) 224.99
CREATIVE GeFORCE ULTRA 2 (AGP) ... 399.99

STONKING MAXX PCs ... From 799.99
FREE CD Re-Writer with every MAXX PC
PLUS 20 GB Hard Drive, 128 MB RAM & DVD in all our award-winning MAXX PCs, for more information please call or visit MAXXPC.com

EPSON STYLUS 670 COLOUR PRINTER ... 99.99
A great priced colour printer with a maximum resolution of 1440x720 DPI with 5 pages per minute print speed. Easily installed via parallel or USB port

ENCORE MULTI-REGION DVD PLAYER ... 189.99
Play DVD movies from all regions & MP3 CDs all in high quality picture and Dolby Digital Surround Sound

Special Reserve DISCOUNT STORES

OPEN TIL LATE

BASILDON
Festival Leisure Park, Basildon, Essex
☎ 01268 28 77 76

BRISTOL
351 Gloucester Road (A38), Bristol.
☎ 0117 924 5000

CHELMSFORD
43 Broomfield Road, Chelmsford, Essex.
☎ 01245 348 777

EGHAM
168 High Street, Egham, Surrey.
☎ 01784 473 444

SAWBRIDGEWORTH
The Maltings, Station Road, Sawbridgeworth, Herts.
☎ 01279 322 399

UPMINSTER
209/213 St Mary's Lane, Upminster, Essex.
☎ 01708 22 55 44

RAM PRICES DOWN

64 MB ONLY £49.99
128 MB ONLY £89.99
Call 0870 725 9999 or visit UKram.com

HAND-BUILT in the UK from only top-quality brand-name components for MAXXIMUM POWER

FREE CD Re-Writer with every MAXX PC PLUS 20 GB Hard Drive, 128 MB RAM and DVD

FROM £799.99

Call 0870 725 9999 or Visit MAXXPC.com

UKpc.net
PC Peripherals, Supplies Upgrades and Components.

GameaDay.co.uk
Win your Game of choice! Any game. Every day.

UKdvd.com
DVD Movies and More

Giant Leap!

FREEOLA AND GET DOTTED
Now with advanced features
FREE PHP, CGI, SSI & FPE
What does this mean?
Professional, functional web sites for everyone: Absolutely FREE
PLUS Domains from only £9.99 fully inclusive for 2 years with FREE Unlimited E-Mail Names, FREE Unlimited Webspace, FREE Customer Support, FREE Website Promotion & more at
Get Dotted.com
FREE services are subject to Freeola.com terms of use which may vary.

Incredible Free Offer

CHOOSE ANY FREE GIFT WHEN YOU JOIN SPECIAL RESERVE (£6.99). THERE IS NO OBLIGATION TO BUY ANYTHING. OVER 40 GIFTS LISTED AT 1FREE.CO.UK OR UKGAMES.COM OR HEAR THE LIST AND ORDER BY PHONE ON 0870 725 9999. OR VISIT ANY SPECIAL RESERVE DISCOUNT STORE. SAVE JUST FIVE REDDIES TO CHOOSE ANOTHER FREE GIFT.

FREE GOLF PRO 1 & 2: WENTWORTH WITH AA GUIDE TO GOLF COURSES

FREE GRAND PRIX 2 & GRAND PRIX MANAGER 2 GAMES

FREE JIMMY WHITE'S 2: CUEBALL GAME

FREE ENCARTA 99 ENCYCLOPEDIA

FREE PC STRIKE ANALOGUE JOYSTICK

FREE PAIR OF CONTROLLERS

Some items carry a surcharge in the shops. All items include UK mainland delivery and VAT. Game prices may vary slightly depending on how you place your order and the delivery option you specify. SAVE = Saving off full recommended price. Some products listed may not yet be available and prices may change - please phone. Sent to press 21/11/00. E. & O. E. Inter-Mediates Ltd, The Maltings, Sawbridgeworth, Herts CM21 9PG.

EPISODE 1 RISE OF THE TYCOONS

STARPEACE

THE PARALLEL DOMAIN

CHECK ON YOUR RANKING

IDENTIFY THE NEEDS OF THE CITIZENS

PLAY ONLINE WITH THOUSANDS OF OTHERS IN A PERSISTENT WORLD.

BECOME A TYCOON, A MODERN PIONEER... CHOOSE YOUR CITY AND WITH $100.000.000 BUDGET, CONTRIBUTE TO ITS DEVELOPMENT.

JOIN A WORLD ONLINE

A MASSIVE MULTIPLAYER ONLINE GAME

•

REALISTIC GRAPHICS IN PERSISTENT WORLDS

•

EMAIL, CHATS AND COMMUNITY TOOLS

•

24/7

COMMUNICATE VIA MAIL & CHAT

YOUR CONGLOMERATE IS YOUR TRADEMARK

MONTE CRISTO
THE MANAGEMENT GAMES COMPANY
www.montecristogames.com

THE ONLINE GATE TO A PARALLEL DOMAIN. WE HAVE COLONISED THE PLANET. AS A TYCOON YOU MUST BUILD YOUR EMPIRE AND HELP THE PLANET GROW. THE COLONY DEPENDS ON YOU! PLAY ONLINE WITH THOUSANDS OF OTHERS IN A PERSISTENT WORLD!
VISIT WWW.MONTECRISTOGAMES.COM

PC CD